

# **Horizon**

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART**

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## **THE BIRTH OF A MYTH**

*by* **ARTHUR KOESTLER**

**ROUND THE HORIZON:**

### **(i) JOURNEY TO AMERICA**

*by* **BARBARA WARD**

### **(ii) LETTER FROM IRELAND**

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## **'CAN WE BE EDUCATED UP TO ART?'**

*by* **MICHAEL ROTHENSTEIN**

**REVIEWS** *by* **COLIN SUMMERFORD** *and* **STEPHEN SPENDER**

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**JOHN BETJEMAN** *and* **CECIL DAY LEWIS**

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# HORIZON

EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

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## COMMENT

IN this number we commemorate two of our dead, Laurence Binyon, aged seventy-four, and Richard Hillary, aged twenty-three. Last autumn Binyon contributed a series of poems, 'The Leaves', to *HORIZON* and this month we print part of one of the last poems he wrote, together with a poem by Rosamond Lehmann, his neighbour, describing him reading it. Hillary was not a contributor to *HORIZON*, although he came round one day before his book appeared to suggest an article about his visit to America. The article never materialized, and was fraught with difficulties, for Hillary had not been allowed by the authorities to visit the places he wished to, lest the injuries to his face inflamed too many mothers against the war. To talk to him for one minute, however, was to realize how very little a face mattered. Hillary paid no attention to his burns and scars and remained an extremely good-looking and confident young man. What he was really like his friend Arthur Koestler has tried to explain. Koestler's essay will appear in a Hillary memorial volume which will include a selection of his letters and unpublished manuscripts, now under preparation. The whole proceeds of this volume as well as part of the estate will go to a Hillary Memorial Fund which will distribute an annual prize for the encouragement of young writers now serving in the United Nations forces.

Hillary was fortunate, if there can be any fortune in so short a life, in that he enjoyed a literary success before he died, but many of those who have been killed in this war have had no time to reveal their potentialities. Such was the case of Rollo Woolley, whose death as a fighter pilot in Tunisia must now be presumed. He also was only twenty-three and was the author of two stories, *The Pupil*, which appeared in *HORIZON*, and *The Search in New Writing*. He was a charming, modest, dreamy, young man, whom I last saw wandering round a picture gallery, and who had the makings of a sensitive writer, one whose attitude was Keatsian as Hillary's was Byronic. It is to be hoped that in the near future it will be possible to have an article about him. This generation, the undergraduates of just before the war and just after it, are mostly silent. Going straight from school or college into the war they had no time to read or travel or form cliques or bring out magazines or start movements; we know next to



nothing about them, not even if they approve or disapprove of the writers of the Thirties, if they are preparing to crown them or ban them after the war. Perhaps the sad truth is that writing is an art which has to be learnt like any other, and that the generation which has gone straight into the battle has had no chance to acquire it. Hillary was a phenomenon, and for this reason seems hardly to represent the war generation, he appears altogether too vivid, individual, emphatic; but Woolley with his one pathetic and lovely story, with his obscurity, his helplessness, his patience and sympathy (he was an admirable pilot-instructor), is typical of all the young men caught up in the struggle whose past is non-existent, whose present is fighting, and whose fulfilment lies in the contemplation of a future from which at any moment they may be snatched away.

---

## ROSAMOND LEHMANN

### IN MEMORIAM:

LAURENCE BINYON

Last month, sitting in his armchair, he read—  
 He who today is dead,  
 Our honoured love, pride, grief—  
 Poems: his spring-winter cluster, blossom and fruit in one.  
 His rich voice lifted that triumphant sheaf.  
 Bonfires and running waters; ordeals of youth;  
 Ruin, rebirth; solaces, lucid meditations of old age;  
 All these were in his words: symbols and images of purifying truth.  
 He closed the page.  
 Quiet, gentle he sat. Then, since the hour grew late:  
 'Goodnight.' He went ahead,  
 Casting his torch-beam towards the garden gate.  
 'Goodnight.' Then, 'Wait', he said,  
 'One moment. You must see  
 Our winter-flowering tree.'

Across the grass we went. Then suddenly  
 From dead of dark the apparition! . . . White  
 Aërial spirit broken from bare wood,  
 Prunus in bloom. . . . 'How beautiful by this light!'  
 Over the boughs he threw its mild dim shower.  
 So thus they stood,—  
 Sweetly illumined she  
 By him; but he  
 Folded in winter dark impenetrably,—  
 Silently shining one upon the other:  
 The old man and the young tree, both in flower.

## LAURENCE BINYON

### WINTER SUNRISE

It is early morning within this room; without,  
 Dark and damp; without and within, stillness  
 Waiting for day: not a sound but a listening air.

Yellow jasmine, delicate on stiff branches,  
 Stands in a Tuscan pot to delight the eye  
 In spare December's patient nakedness.

Suddenly, softly, as if at a breath breathed  
 On the pale wall, a magical apparition.  
 The shadow of the jasmine, branch and blossom!

It was not there, it is there, in a perfect image;  
 And all is changed. It is like a memory lost  
 Returning without a reason into the mind;

And it seems to me that the beauty of the shadow  
 Is more beautiful than the flower; a strange beauty,  
 Pencilled and silently deepening to distinctness

As a memory stealing out of the mind's slumber,  
 A memory floating up from a dark water,  
 Can be more beautiful than the thing remembered.



## JOHN BETJEMAN

### ON A LATE VICTORIAN WATER COLOUR OF OXFORD

Shines, billowing cold and gold from Cumnor Hurst,  
A winter sunset on wet cobbles, where  
By Canterbury Gate the fishtails flare.  
Someone in Corpus, reading for a first,  
Pulls down red blinds and flounders on, immers'd  
In Hegel, heedless of the yellow glare  
On porch and pinnacle and window-square,  
The brown stone crumbling where the showers have burst.

A late, last luncheon staggers out of Peck  
And hires a hansom: from half-flooded grass  
Returning athletes bark at what they see.  
But we will mount the horse-tram's upper deck  
And wave salute to Buols', as we pass  
Bound for the Banbury Road in time for tea.

## CECIL DAY LEWIS

### O DREAMS, O DESTINATIONS

#### I

For infants time is like a humming shell  
Heard between sleep and sleep, wherein the shores  
Foam-fringed, wind-fluted of the strange earth dwell  
And the sea's cavernous hunger faintly roars.  
It is the humming pole of summer lanes  
Whose sound quivers like heat-haze endlessly  
Over the corn, over the popped plains—  
An emanation from the earth or sky.  
Faintly they hear, through the womb's lingering haze,  
A rumour of that sea to which they are born:  
They hear the ringing pole of summer days,  
But need not know what hungers for the corn.  
They are the lispings rushes in a stream—  
Grace-notes of a profound, legato dream.

## HORIZON

## II

Children look down upon the morning-gray  
 Tissue of mist that veils a valley's lap:  
 Their fingers itch to tear it and unwrap  
 The flags, the roundabouts, the gala day.  
 They watch the spring rise inexhaustibly—  
 A breathing thread out of the eddied sand,  
 Sufficient to their day: but half their mind  
 Is on the sailed and glittering estuary.  
 Fondly we wish their mist might never break,  
 Knowing it hides so much that best were hidden:  
 We'd chain them by the spring, lest it should broaden  
 For them into a quicksand and a wreck.  
 But they slip through our fingers like the source,  
 Like mist, like time that has flagged out their course.

## III

That was the fatal move, the ruination  
 Of innocence so innocently begun,  
 When in the lawless orchard of creation  
 The child left this fruit for that rosier one.  
 Reaching towards the far thing, we begin it;  
 Looking beyond, or backward, more and more  
 We grow unfaithful to the unique minute  
 Till, from neglect, its features stale and blur.  
 Fish, bird or beast was never thus unfaithful—  
 Man only casts the image of his joys  
 Beyond his senses' reach; and by this fateful  
 Act, he confirms the ambiguous power of choice.  
 Innocence made that first choice. It is she  
 Who weeps, a child chained to the outraged tree.

## IV

Our youthtime passes down a colonnade  
 Shafted with alternating light and shade.  
 All's dark or dazzle there. Half in a dream  
 Rapturously we move, yet half afraid  
 Never to wake. That diamond-point, extreme  
 Brilliance engraved on us a classic theme:  
 The shaft of darkness had its lustre too,  
 Rising where earth's concentric mysteries gleam.  
 Oh youth-charmed hours, that made an avenue  
 Of fountains playing us on to love's full view,  
 A cypress walk to some romantic grave—  
 Waking, how false in outline and in hue  
 We find the dreams that flickered on our cave:  
 Only your fire, which cast them, still seems true.

## V

All that time there was thunder in the air;  
 Our nerves branched and flickered with summer lightning.  
 The taut crab-apple, the pampas quivering, the glare  
 On the roses seemed irrelevant, or a heightening  
 At most of the sealed-up hour wherein we awaited  
 What?—some explosive oracle to abash  
 The platitudes on the lawn: heaven's delegated  
 Angel—the golden rod, our burning bush?  
 No storm broke. Yet in retrospect the rose  
 Mounting vermilion, fiding, glowing again  
 Like a fire's heart, that breathless inspiration  
 Of pampas grass, crab-tree's attentive pose  
 Never were so divinely charged as then—  
 The veiled Word's flesh, a near annunciation.

## VI

Symbols of gross experience!—our grief  
 Flowed, like a sacred river, underground:  
 Desire bred fierce abstractions on the mind,  
 Then like an eagle soared beyond belief.  
 Often we tried our breast against the thorn,  
 Our paces on the turf: whither we flew,  
 Why we should agonize, we hardly knew—  
 Nor what ached in us, asking to be born.  
 Ennui of youth!—thin air above the clouds,  
 Vain divination of the sunless stream  
 Mirror that impotence, till we redeem  
 Our birthright, and the shadowplay concludes.  
 Ah, not in dreams, but when our souls engage  
 With the common mesh and moil, we come of age.

## VII

Older, we build a road where once our active  
 Heat threw up mountains and the deep dales veined:  
 We're glad to gain the limited objective,  
 Knowing the war we fight in has no end.  
 The road must needs follow each contour moulded  
 By that fire in its losing fight with earth:  
 We march over our past, we may behold it  
 Dreaming a slave's dream on our bivouac hearth.  
 Lost the archaic dawn wherein we started,  
 The appetite for wholeness: now we prize  
 Half-loaves, half-truths—enough for the half-hearted,  
 The gleam snatched from corruption satisfies.  
 Dead youth, forgive us if, all but defeated,  
 We raise a trophy where your honour lies.



## VIII

But look, the old illusion still returns,  
 Walking a field-path where the succory burns  
 Like summer's eye, blue lustre-drops of noon,  
 And the heart follows it and freshly yearns:  
 Yearns to the sighing distances beyond  
 Each height of happiness, the vista drowned  
 In gold-dust haze, and dreams itself immune  
 From change and night to which all else is bound.  
 Love, we have caught perfection for a day  
 As succory holds a gem of halcyon ray:  
 Summer burns out, its flower will tarnish soon—  
 Deathless illusion, that could so relay  
 The truth of flesh and spirit, sun and clay  
 Singing for once together all in tune!

## IX

To travel like a bird, lightly to view  
 Deserts where stone gods founder in the sand,  
 Ocean embraced in a white sleep with land;  
 To escape time, always to start anew.  
 To settle like a bird, make one devoted  
 Gesture of permanence upon the spray  
 Of shaken stars and autumns; in a bay  
 Beyond the crestfallen surges to have floated.  
 Each is our wish. Alas, the bird flies blind,  
 Hooded by a dark sense of destination:  
 Her weight on the glass calm leaves no impression,  
 Her home is soon a basketful of wind.  
 Travellers, we're fabric of the road we go;  
 We settle, but like feathers on time's flow.

---

 ABOUT THIS NUMBER

MISS BARBARA WARD is on the Editorial Staff of the *Economist* and is Secretary of the Sword of the Spirit. Alexander Comfort is a young poet, novelist, editor and medical student. Michael Rothenstein is a painter and brother of the Director of the Tate Gallery. To commemorate the centenary of Henry James, the next HORIZON will include a long essay on his later novels by Raymond Mortimer. During the summer HORIZON will publish an all American number which will give a picture of the most recent trends in American poetry, fiction, criticism and painting.

ARTHUR KOESTLER

# THE BIRTH OF A MYTH

IN MEMORY OF RICHARD HILLARY

## I

WRITING about a dead friend is writing against time, a chase after a receding image: catch him, hold him, before he becomes petrified into a myth. For the dead are arrogant; it is as hard to be at ease with them as with someone who has served with you in the ranks after he received his commission. Their perverse silence has a numbing effect: you have lost the race before it started, you will never get hold of him as he was. Already the fatal, legend-forming mechanism is at work: those pleasant trifles are freezing into Biographical Anecdotes, and weightless episodes hang like stalactites in the caves of your memory.

In times of war the dead recede quicker and myths form faster; already there is one growing around Hillary and it is easy to foresee that it will wax and expand, until his name has become one of the symbolic names of this war. The growth of a myth cannot be influenced and one should not attempt it. For myths grow like crystals: there is some diffuse emotion latent in the social medium which strives for expression as the molecules in a saturated solution strive to form a coherent pattern; and as soon as a suitable core is found, they group themselves around it and the crystal is formed, the myth is born. The question, of course, is what makes a suitable core. Obviously it must have some affinity with that vague, diffuse sentiment, that craving for the right type of hero to turn into a myth; obviously he must express something which is the unconscious content of that craving. Now Hillary's life and death was in a way symbolic and he knew it—but a symbol for precisely what? That is what he could not, and would have so much liked to know:

‘. . . . I am writing this<sup>1</sup> just before going to bed and I feel a little sick, for I have learned today that Colin Pinckney has been killed in Singapore. You do not know him, but you will, and I hope, like him, when you read the book. His death makes an apt postscript and it raises in my mind yet again the question

<sup>1</sup> To ‘X’. 1/3/42.

which I have put in the book and attempted to answer, of what is the responsibility of the man who is left. I say man and not men, for I am now the last. It is odd that I who always gave least should be the one who remained. Why, I wonder. . . .

What kind of responsibility was this that fell to him? What was the symbol he stood for? A myth may grow and appeal to us, may make us respond like tuning-forks to the vibration of the right chord—and yet we may not know why; we may sense the symbol without having deciphered it. After all it took over two thousand years until somebody explained to us why the myth of *Cædipus Rex* makes us hold our breath.

In the last two years of his twenty-three, Hillary was much concerned to find that answer, to analyse the core of the legend which he felt closing in around him. He knew he was going to die, and he wanted to find out why. In fact he had deliberately chosen a course of which he knew that it could not end otherwise but by his death:

‘. . . You ask me to have faith darling.<sup>1</sup> Yes, but faith in what? “That things will be all right,” you say. Depends what you mean by all right. If you mean faith that some miracle will happen and that I shall be ordered to do some job which I could not only do well, but enjoy, then I say No: it is bad to have that faith and very undermining. If you mean faith that I have done the right thing in coming back,<sup>2</sup> then Yes. But if you mean faith that I shall survive, why then again No. If this thing plays to its logical conclusion there is no reason why I should survive. After a few hours’ flying my instinct will tell me that I shall survive, while my reason will tell me that I shall not—and this time reason will be all right.’

And again:

‘. . . <sup>3</sup>As before, the more I fly the more my instinct will tell me that I shall get through, while my reason telling me that I shall not, will grow fainter.

‘But this time my reason will be right. I know too much not to doubt it. . . .’

Now this is rather odd, isn’t it? For normally it is our instinct which warns and scares us, and reasoning which reassures us. With him it is the other way round. But there is something even odder to come. We have seen how treacherous this instinct was. He knew it and repeatedly emphasized it; e.g. ‘. . . already the potion is beginning to work. My walk as I enter the Mess is jaunty’, etc. And yet he takes the fatal decision to return to flying, deliberately following his instinct and against his reason. A few days after his arrival at the station he writes:

<sup>1</sup> To ‘X’. 1/12/42.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. back to flying two years after his first crash.

<sup>3</sup> To A. K. 2/12/42.



'One can rationalize for ever and one's reason finally tells one that it is madness, but it is one's instinct to which one listens. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

And in another letter:

'This is indeed a queer place for journey's end.'<sup>2</sup>

Thus he distrusts his 'instinct' when it tells him that he shall survive; but trusts it when it pushes him to his journey's end. Who cheats here whom? Apparently the 'instinct' cheats its victim: it lures him into the death trap with the mirage of his jaunty invulnerability. But at closer view we find that the victim lets himself be led into the trap with open eyes, and even with his tongue in his cheek:

'I feel like the Hollywood gangster hero, who voluntarily walking back into gaol, hears the prison gates clang behind him for the last time. . . .'<sup>3</sup>

That strange and suspect 'instinct' whose sentence he accepts and whose consolations he discards—resentfully, wistfully, arguing, grimacing and even 'weeping as a child', but finally submitting in humbleness and acceptance—that 'instinct' now appears to us as a very strange force indeed. We have no scientific term as yet to name it; but it seems oddly akin to that other force which makes the core the captive of the crystal, closing in around it to fulfil its predestined pattern.

## II

We see here indeed with almost clinical precision how the myth invades and destroys its chosen object. We see in his letters as under a microscope how the hero-craving, symbol-eager expectations of his Time creep like microbes under his skin, penetrate the blood-stream and burn him out, in order to preserve the symbolic shell.

But all this does not answer our question: a symbol for what? After all, Pat Finucane shot down thirty-two and he only five (with three probables). He wasn't even given a medal. And *The Last Enemy*, the most promising book that came out of his generation, was promise and not fulfilment. What was it then—what attitude, idea, state of mind, latent hope did he express? Young Hillary himself would have given anything to know, but he was not allowed to. It would have been against the rules of the game; for in these dim realms the right thing has always to be

<sup>1</sup> To A. K. 3/12/42.

<sup>2</sup> To 'X'. 25/11/42.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

done for the wrong reasons. All he knew was that 'his instinct was right about this thing',<sup>1</sup> and with the writer's passion to formulate he made one attempt after another to explain why it was right. He could not succeed, for had he succeeded the 'instinct' would have died and he survived. As it was, he had to die in search of his own epitaph.

The first he proposed for himself were four lines from Verlaine:

Quoique sans patrie et sans roi  
Et très brave ne l'étant guère,  
J'ai voulu mourir à la guerre.  
La mort n'a pas voulu de moi.

But that was still in his early period, a hang-over from adolescence, the nihilistic post-puberty pose. It is written in retrospect and closes the first chapter of *The Last Enemy*. Then comes the turning point: 'I see they got you too'; the 'lifting of the veil on possibilities of thought so far beyond the grasp of the human mind.' And in the last chapter the epitaph has changed:

"Le sentiment d'être tout et l'évidence de n'être rien." That was me.

In that last chapter the dazzling facility of the previous parts of the book turns into almost helpless stammering. But once the crisis is over—that inevitable process of breaking up and reforming of the personality—he sets out again to discover what he stands for:

'It was with some hesitation that I sat down to write the book, for I felt that when someone finally pointed out that the impact of this war was something more than a series of movie climaxes on the youth of the country, that it had some mental impact, the thing should be done well and worthy of the subject. Whether I succeeded I don't know. Finally I got so sick of the sop about our "Island Fortress" and "The Knights of the Air" that I determined to write it anyway in the hope that the next generation might realize that while stupid we were not that stupid, that we could remember only too well that all this has been seen in the last war, but that in spite of that and not because of it, we still thought this one worth fighting.'<sup>2</sup>

It isn't much of an explanation, except for one turn of phrase. 'In spite of that and not because of it . . .'—that somehow sets the tuning forks in us into faint vibration; for we all more or less feel that we fight this war rather *in spite of* than *because of* something. The big words and slogans rather embarrass us, we don't

<sup>1</sup> ' . . . I know that my instinct is right about this thing and you have never questioned my decision. Bless you for that.' (To 'X'. 19/11/42.)

<sup>2</sup> To L. D., Autumn 1941.

like to be taken for quite as naïve as that. This tongue-in-the-cheek patriotism, the attitude of the sceptic knight, the heretic crusader, is as typical for the mental climate of this war as the stoning of the dachshunds for the last; and we get a hint of the quality of the forces which select this specific type of hero for their purpose. But it is merely a hint, not more. It is somewhat elaborated in another letter, written after the torture of one of those monotonously repeated operations by which they re-made his face patch by patch until, as on a used coat, there were more patches than original tissue on it, and is dated:

‘In Hospital,

‘In bed,

‘In anger.

‘. . . Humanity is irony from the neck up. I guess that’s the first thing you’ve got to realize if you want to fight for it. You’ll get nothing out of it, and if you don’t find virtue being its own reward sufficient, you have to be human enough to be amused by it, otherwise God help you.’<sup>1</sup>

Six weeks later, after another operation—this time it is a new arm splint for his hands—he tries to formulate that same elusive craving from another angle:

‘What is the particular quality of the Air Force? I find it hard to analyse. I suppose it . . . has something which sets its members very distinctly apart from the other services. To say that it is an ethereal quality is both whimsical and untrue, yet I can think of no better word. It is something, some knowledge, not understood if you like, which can only be born of the combined humility and supreme self confidence which every combat pilot feels. Perhaps in the end it is this. Any human being lies closer to the unseen than any organization, but as an organization the Air Force leaves more scope for the human being as such than any other. And yet if they do feel this thing, it must be unconsciously, for they are strangely disappointing—like one of Mr. Morgan’s novels—the theme is sublime, but in the attainment of it something is lacking. Will the time come in the days of peace, as Mr. Harrison asks, “when they will conquer something more than fear”? . . .’<sup>2</sup>

How jealously he guards the integrity of his scepticism! He sets it like a watch-dog before his door-step. It barked all the time—furiously, excitedly, amusingly. But it didn’t bite, and behind it the door was open, the house without defence.

Five months later the ‘instinct’ had its way and he was back at flying—although his hands, which looked like bird-claws and held knife and fork like chop-sticks, had not the strength to work the brake of the heavy twin-engined craft on which he was

<sup>1</sup> To ‘X’. 19/4/42.      <sup>2</sup> To ‘X’. 5/6/42.



trained; they had to fit an extension to the brake lever.<sup>1</sup> He couldn't release the under-carriage either—he had to take up somebody to do it for him.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes he could not fix the straps and flew unstrapped (' . . by now I really don't care. If we do a crash landing, we do a crash landing. If I go through the windscreen, I go through the windscreen'<sup>3</sup>); sometimes his damaged eyes, fitted with artificial eyelids, misread the altimeter.<sup>4</sup> He suffered from splitting headaches, the altitude made him sick,<sup>5</sup> the struggle of taxiing the heavy engine in a gale took the skin off his burned hands.<sup>6</sup> Somehow he succeeded in fooling the medical board, but not to fool himself. His last night-training-flights were a chain of close escapes; and sooner or later the chain had to break.

But why then, in God's name, did he go back?

Was it vanity? 'I wonder if that is true of me, or whether, as some silly girl said, I am going back purely out of vanity. I think not; because implicit in my decision was the acceptance of the fact that I shall not come through.' You can be clever and twist this around and say that the quotation does not disprove the charge, *qui s'excuse s'accuse*, and so on. Granted; but then you have to find a more illuminating name for an urge which accepts destruction to get satisfied. Narcissus did not burn himself alive to preserve his image in the stream.

Urge of self-destruction, masochism, morbidity? . . . 'My darling, I am like a man, who, travelling through a dark tunnel and seeing a pinpoint of light ahead, has shouted for joy, then hesitated, stricken for fear it may be a mirage. Reassured, he presses forward, silent, his heart hammering, and it is only when he stumbles out into the light that he relaxes and, weeping for joy, pours out his heart. Richard'<sup>7</sup>. A boy who writes this kind of love-letter does not seem a morbid masochist. But again one may argue that the one does not exclude the other, *les extremes se touchent*, etc.; and again granted.

Fanatical devotion to a cause? . . . 'I could not immediately disabuse my sympathisers of their misplaced pity without

<sup>1</sup> Cf. letter to 'X'. 1/12/42.

<sup>2</sup> To 'X'. 30/12/42.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. letter to 'X'. 3/1/43.

<sup>4</sup> To 'X'. 12/2/42.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. letter to 'X'. 30/12/42.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. letter to 'X'. 3/1/43.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. letter to 'X'. 7/3/43.

appearing mock-modest or slightly insane. And so I remained an impostor. They would say, "I hope someone got the swine who got you: how you must hate those devils!" and I would say weakly, "Oh, I don't know," and leave it at that. I could not explain that I had not been injured in their war, that no thoughts of "our island fortress" or of "making the world safe for democracy" had bolstered me up when going into combat. I could not explain that what I had suffered I in no way regretted; that I welcomed it; and that now that it was over I was in a sense grateful for it and certain that in time it would help me along the road of my own private development.<sup>1</sup> But perhaps this too is just modesty after all, or inverted pride; the young Englishman's love to overstate his understatements.

Thus we can go on being clever and analytical, and stick labels on our victim until he looks like a globetrotter's cabin trunk. There will always be a certain amount of truth in this kind of statements, they fit in a loose way everybody, like shilling horoscopes; and if one of our clinical adjectives does not fit directly, we can always turn it round by putting a minus sign before it and call it over-compensation or 'the revenge of the repressed'. We are, of course, fond of our little adjectives, they save us from pathos and embarrassment, from the threat of having to face the tragic implication. We prefer to let our lights shine like candles under the stars. But once they have burned down we are back from where we started, under a sky too large for us. Our adjectives fade, the labels peel off, only the subject remains, alone under the stars, faced with that nameless force which is set to destroy him. We watch the struggle, his reason against his fate, the man against the myth; and the myth devours the man.

'I shall go back, I think. I can rationalize no further. I must let instinct decide. Maybe it is for this that I have withdrawn into myself. I don't know. I can make nothing of this letter. (You perhaps will.) And yet in some way it seems an explanation. . . . It is those circles of peace again. They must return—they must. . . .'<sup>2</sup>

How he struggles in the net! To escape, to live; after all, one is only twenty-two—

'Do not, darling, I beseech you, pucker your lovely brows at this levity for it is not what it seems; but cloaking lightly the agitated palpitations of a bewildered heart. . . .

<sup>1</sup> *The Last Enemy*, p. 206.

<sup>2</sup> To 'X'. 6/10/42.

'Were I Mr. Beverley Nichols, had I any suède shoes, and were there any daffodils, I would now trip lightly outside and prance among them for the sheer joy of living. Thwarted by all three factors, I will content myself with a stoop of port in the mess, a slightly smug expression being the only visible sign that inwardly I am hugging myself with joyful anticipation. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

—After all, one is only twenty-two and one still has the undrawn cheque for about twice as many years in one's pocket. But there is no escape, and he feels it; so he goes on trying at least to name the nameless force which destroys him. We have followed his various attempts from that first 'Quoique sans patrie et sans roi' to that final 'I can rationalize no further. I must let instinct decide'. Yet once the decision is taken he once more tries, *post festum*, to rationalize it. This last attempt to decipher the oracle dominates his letters in the last few weeks before he is killed:

'Funny about your instinct about Kennington. Had I not stayed with him I should not have read "The Mint" and had I not read it I should not have come back (perhaps).'<sup>2</sup>

The meaning of this becomes clear from the following passage, written one week later:

'When I was still waffling I read "The Mint", T. E. Lawrence's unpublished agony in the Air Force, describing his first period at Uxbridge as an Air Force A.C.2. This, I confess, influenced me strongly, as it was what I was looking for. He found amongst those airmen and the ordinary things he shared with them, the petty tyrannies, etc., some kind of fellowship and happiness which before had been denied him.

'As much as anything I came back for that, and yet. . . .'<sup>3</sup>

So that is what he came back for: fellowship and happiness. It is a long way from 'Humanity is irony from the neck up', written seven months ago; those who die young, walk fast. But this is not the last station either. There is a strange irony behind this last attempt to explain the motives of his return, for the letter goes on as follows:

' . . . and yet it is difficult to reorientate oneself to three years ago. The young pilots are the same and yet not the same—less fine somehow. I am outside still. . . . I look up sometimes in an armament lecture and expect to see Noel Agazarian sitting beside me, instead there is some pimply youth picking his nose. . . .'

And earlier in the same letter:

'Wretched I am that this station should be so utterly cold and bare, not only of trees and houses, but of all human contact. . . . My first two nights I crept back to my hut and wept like a child, much to my own surprise, as I thought I had steeled myself for this. . . .'

<sup>1</sup> To 'X'. 26/1/42.

<sup>2</sup> To 'X'. 25/11/42.

<sup>3</sup> To A. K. 3/12/42.



Even Lawrence, who had such a decisive influence on him, lets him down. The first book he discovers, the day after his arrival, in the station library is Lawrence's *Letters*, edited by David Garnett; this appears to him fraught with a curious significance: 'I took the book out and, believe it or not, opened it at this page<sup>1</sup> . . .' He then quotes Garnett's comment on Lawrence's desire to go back to the R.A.F.:

'One wonders whether his will had not become greater than his intelligence. The courage of the boy too proud to make a fuss is something we admire; in an educated man it is ridiculous and a sign of abnormality.'

This judgment on Lawrence he applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to himself; it is a devaluation, a terrible debunking of his motives, of the search for 'fellowship and happiness'. He does not cease complaining about his disappointment and loneliness:

'Perhaps it is merely the fear of being so much alone—a bitter pill when I always thought I liked it so much. But the total lack of human contact is awful—they are machines, not men. At Fighter Command they were people. One could talk to them and like them. . . . I love you so very much that at moments I think my heart will break. You are everything that is not here—warmth, humanity, humour and intelligence.'<sup>2</sup>

There are, of course, moments of exhilaration, as when the younger pilots congratulate him on his first solo-flight in a twin-engined plane:

' . . . So they are human after all. I feel a new-old warmth begin to course through me; the potion is already at work.

'I pick up a newspaper—Beveridge Report? Oh the fellow is thinking about after the war—what do we care about after the war; we'll be dead anyway. Let's find out what Jane's doing in the *Daily Mirror*. We turn to the page—we comment on her legs, and I look closely at the faces around me, and what I see pleases me. I am happy.

'We wander in to dinner and afterwards we crowd round the fire, order beers, more beers, and talk shop. Time passes. Am I bored? A little, but only a very little, for tomorrow I shall be up again.'<sup>3</sup>

But these moments of fellowship and happiness are short, and of a somewhat hectic, artificial character; then the solitude closes in once more on him. His days are now counted; he has but ten more left to live:

'I ponder K.'s theory that l'espoir de la fraternité is always a wild goose chase unless one is tight or physically exhausted in a crowd—as after long marches.

'Tonight I am almost convinced he is right. But he must not be—for it was for that reason that I returned.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> To 'X'. 25/11/42.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*    <sup>3</sup> To 'X'. 3/12/42.    <sup>4</sup> To 'X'. 30/12/42.

Ten days more and the wild goose chase is over. But is it true that he returned for that—*l'espoir de la fraternité*? And fraternity with whom? Behind the pimpled youth there is the image of Noel Agazarian, of Peter Pease and Colin Pinckney and the others, of whom he alone survived, the 'last of the long-haired boys,' the flying undergraduates of the Battle of Britain. The young pilots at the station are 'somehow not the same'—at twenty-three he feels like an anachronism, a survivor from another generation. One after the other they had been killed; there is a sentence which runs like a monotonous row of tombstones through his book: From this flight Broody Benson did not return. From this flight Bubble Waterston did not return. From this flight Larry Cunningham did not return. 'Each time they climbed into their machines and took off to combat, they were paying instinctive tribute to their comrades who were dead.' He was the only one left, and he had to go on paying the tribute; for the survivor is always a debtor. He thought he came back for fellowship with the living, while already he belonged to the fraternity of the dead.

We find, then, that this last attempt to explain and rationalize his motives is as true as his earlier ones, but not the final truth. The final truth is probably a pattern composed of all the threads we have picked up, and followed for a short while and dropped again. For the pattern is more than the sum total of the threads; it has its own symbolic design of which the threads know nothing. They are ordinary strings, twined of cause and effect; but in the completed design the effect seems to operate the cause. The threads are subject to causality; the pattern to finality.

### III

Perhaps I shall be accused of romanticizing. There are those who like their heroes as idols of clay, and those who like them cut into slices for examination under the microscope. The latter will be delighted and the former shocked by the publication of Hillary's letters; for those of his last period are terrifying to read. They are the letters of a very young man who knows that he is doomed, looking into a mirror:

'All day my eyes have pricked with tears, and now at last in the privacy of my room I have been weeping like a child for an hour. Why? Is it fear? I have

<sup>1</sup> *The Last Enemy*, p. 220.

not yet seen an aeroplane and I know not yet whether the night will terrify me or not. Is it just the atmosphere? Very largely I know. But perhaps this is what they mean in the Air Force by "lack of moral fibre". I have often wondered. Maybe this is what happens when a man's nerve goes. And yet I am not consciously frightened of anything, merely unutterably wretched. . . .<sup>1</sup>

This wretchedness is due to purely physical reasons:

' . . . Being a rather selfish fellow, however, what is of far more interest to me is how to keep the extremely bitter cold not only from petrifying the burnt skin on my hands and face, but from prying its way into my very soul. . . . I suppose the atmosphere brought to the surface the subconscious dread of dying up here, at night and in the cold.'<sup>2</sup>

Of course he does not give himself away; nobody on the station can guess his agonies; he is a popular figure and they think him a 'rather droll fellow' as he stalks the aerodrome with his burnt face and hands, the constant, boyish pout on his grafted lips. There is the routine, the bull-shit, the dances, the average number of crashes; one might as well walk one's calvary between Oxford Circus and Marble Arch.

These moods of complete despair alternate with moments of elation; with the elusive touch of those Circles of Peace travelling past in the air:

'Much better today, for I have actually flown. . . . Were it not that one's chattering teeth force one to walk on, it would be time well spent just to sit on the aerodrome and look out across the great stillness—for it is still; the roar of machines taking off and landing only seeming to emphasize it.

'It's curious psychologically that I have only to step into an aeroplane—that monstrous thing of iron and steel just watching for its chance to down me, and all fear goes. I am at peace again.'<sup>3</sup>

And there are other moments of a great weariness—almost amounting to a desire that it may be over, and over soon. Talking of a dance on the aerodrome, a week before his death:

'I want to go to bed, but I stay on watching people getting drunk—talking of the "blacks" they put up the night before, etc. At 2.30 I am still there. Why? I don't know. I've long ago got over that distressing emotion which should be confined to middle-aged women and very young boys—the fear of missing something—and yet I stayed.'<sup>4</sup>

The worst is that he has what the French Catholics call *la maladie du scrupule*; he despises himself for his 'egotistical meanderings'. 'Forgive me this long and (yes, I believe it's true) self-pitying epistle. Don't be ashamed of me if you can help it.'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> To 'X'. 25/11/42.

<sup>2</sup> To A. K. 2/12/42.

<sup>3</sup> To 'X'. 1/12/42.

<sup>4</sup> To 'X'. 30/12/42.

<sup>5</sup> To 'X'. 25/11/42.



The fraternity of the dead has its peculiar etiquette; one has not only to live up to one's form, one has to die up to it. But then again, there is the writer's curiosity which forces him to feel his own pulse, to jot down on long rambling pages of pencil-scrrawl the minutes of his agony; there are the nerve-tearing oscillations between cant and introspection, acceptance and revolt, arrogance and humility, twenty-three years and eternity:

'K. has a theory for this. He believes there are two planes of existence, which he calls the *vie tragique* and the *vie triviale*. Usually we move on the plane of the *vie triviale*, but occasionally in moments of elation, danger, etc., we find ourselves transferred to the plane of the *vie tragique*, with its un-common-sense cosmic perspective. One of the miseries of the human condition is that we can neither live permanently on the one nor on the other plane, but oscillate between the two. When we are on the trivial plane, the realities of the other are nonsense—overstrung nerves, etc. When we live on the tragic plane, the joys and sorrows of the other are shallow, frivolous, trifling. Some people try all their lives to make up their minds on which plane to live—unable to recognize that we are condemned to live alternately on both in a biological rhythm. But it happens that in exceptional circumstances—for instance if one has to live through a long stretch of time in physical danger, one is placed as it were on the intersection line of the two planes; a curious situation which is a kind of tight-rope walking on one's nerves. As few people can bear it for long, they elaborate conventions and formulæ—e.g. R.A.F. slang and understatement. In other words, they try to assimilate the tragic with the trivial plane. *Au fond*, he thinks, that is one of the main mechanisms of the evolution of civilisation: to petrify the violent and tragic into dignified conventional formulæ. I think he is right.'<sup>1</sup>

Actually I still believe that this is true, as metaphors go. It is this jump from one plane to the other which transforms undergraduates into heroes, psychology into mythology, a thousand individually conditioned reflexes into the Battle of Britain. The mere passing of time has cumulatively a similar result—for the present is mainly on the trivial, history always on the tragic plane. Wars and catastrophes accelerate this process by producing what one might call the Pompeii-effect: schoolboys playing with marbles are caught by the lava and petrified into monuments.

But perhaps some will say that the lava romanticized the boys.

#### IV

There is another type of person condemned to walk the tight-rope on the intersection-line of the two planes: the artist, particularly the writer. The pilot can only stand the strain by projecting the

<sup>1</sup> To 'X'. 10/12/42.

tragic on to the trivial plane. The artist proceeds the opposite way: he tries to see the trivial from the perspective of the tragic or absolute plane.

Does Hillary, as a writer, succeed in that? The promise is there, and the fulfilment, I believe, would have come. Among all the writing airmen, Hillary, with St. Exupéry, form a category apart. The others he compares to 'people who happened to be watching an accident with a camera in their hands and they got a good picture'; whereas he is the professional cameraman who always will get a good picture, even if there is no accident.

The professional touch in *The Last Enemy* is unmistakable. There is a dazzling facility of expression very rare in a first book. It has all the qualities of first-rate reportage—precision, vividity, brilliancy, economy, excitement. But for two chapters I would call it the best reportage that has come out of the war. And it is precisely these two chapters—'The world of Peter Pease' and 'I see they got you too'—which, through their failure, prove that he was more than a reporter. In these two chapters he tries to tackle the problem of ethical values *sub specie æternitatis*, and here all facility and glibness suddenly leave him, the language becomes flat, the thought disarmingly naïve. One feels that there is an overwhelming emotion which cuts his breath to helpless stammering:

'... I would write of these men, of Peter and of the others, I would write for them and would write with them. They would be at my side. And to whom would I address this book, to whom would I be speaking when I spoke of these men? And that too I knew. To Humanity, for Humanity must be the public of any book. Yes, that despised Humanity which I had scorned and ridiculed to Peter.'<sup>1</sup>

If one compares this with the accomplished virtuosity of the reportage chapters, one realizes where the promise lacks fulfilment. The violence of emotional perception, and the facility to report the factual, are basic qualities which make the writer; in *The Last Enemy* these two still lead a somewhat separated existence. But there are passages in the book, a good many of them, where they actually meet. There is, for instance, his recollection of the first fatal crash in the squadron:

'Of crashes. It was after an armament lecture in one of the huts when we heard, very high, the thin wailing scream of a plane coming down fast. The corporal sat down and rolled himself a cigarette. He took out the paper and

<sup>1</sup> *The Last Enemy*, p. 221.

made of it a neat trough with his forefinger, opened the tin of tobacco and sprinkled a little on to the paper, ran his tongue along the paper edge and then rolled it. As he put it in his mouth we heard the crash, maybe a mile away. The corporal lit a match and spoke: "I remember the last time we had one of those. I was on the salvage party. It wasn't a pretty sight."

'We learned later that the man had been on a war-load height test and had presumably fainted. They did not find much of him, but we filled up the coffin with sand and gave him a grand funeral.'<sup>1</sup>

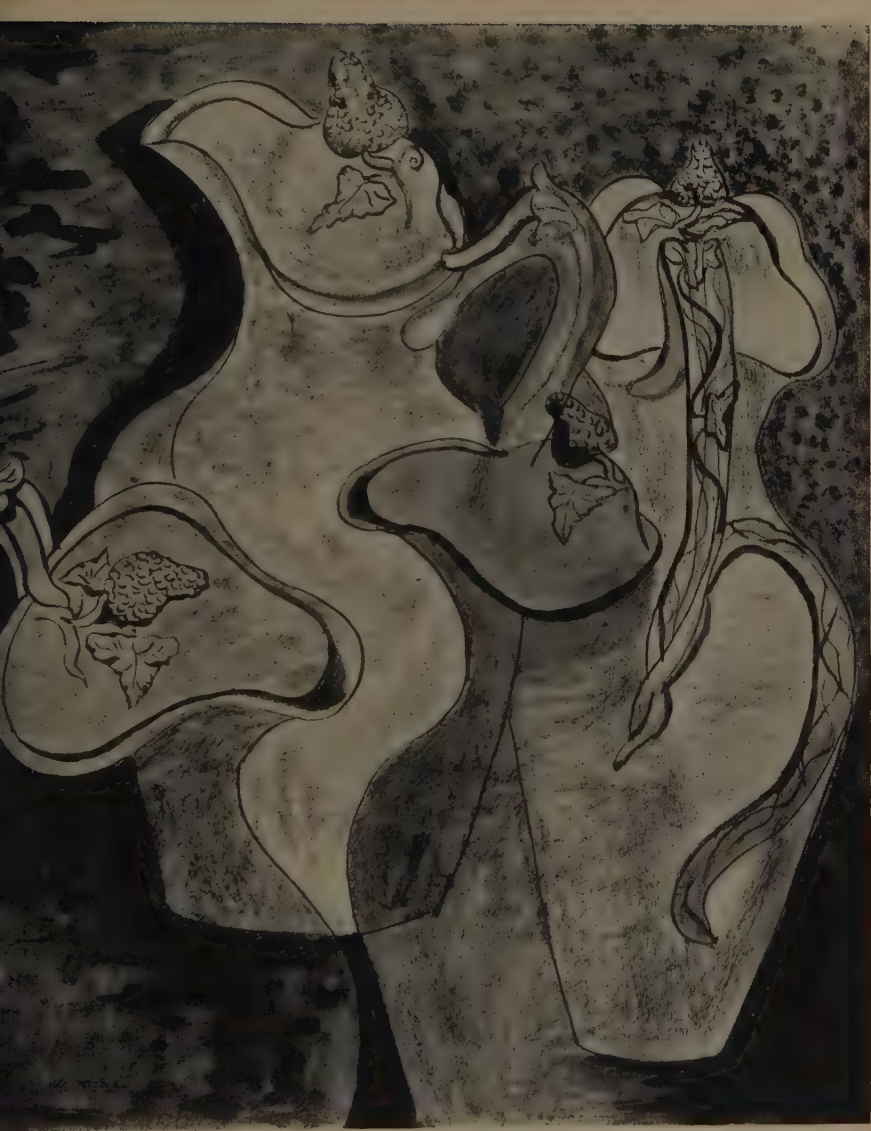
There it is—the interlacing of the tragic and the trivial. We find it again in the puzzling effect of 'The beauty shop'—of that horror-cabinet of plastic surgery in the hospital, where noses grow from foreheads, grafted white lips are painted red with mercurochrome, grafted eyelids which have not taken are torn off again and thrown into the bucket. But all this is told with such a superbly grotesque twist that instead of being sick we chuckle and grin in blasphemous hilarity. How does he achieve this? It is the effect of walking on the intersection line; for what strikes us as grotesque is the reflection of the tragic in the distorting mirror of the trivial.

Passages like this are strewn all over the book; one meets them on every second or third page—memories of Oxford, a regatta in Germany, the first contact with a Spitfire, panic during a night-flight, the children of Tarfside, portraits of pilots, samples of R.A.F. atmosphere bottled on the aerodrome, crashes, death, drunkenness, operations and more operations, blindness, quarrels with nurses and philosophical talks. The two planes are not yet assimilated, but while moving on one, he keeps a feeler on the other plane. And that gives one confidence that, granted to live a few more years and write a few more books, the promise would have been fulfilled.

As it is, his place in literature can only be marked by a blank; and yet we can at least define with some probability the position of that blank on the map. With the 'bourgeois' novel getting more and more exhausted and insipid as the era which produced it draws to its close, a new type of writer seems to take over from the cultured middle-class humanist: airmen, revolutionaries, adventurers, men who live the dangerous life; with a new operative technique of observation, a curious *alfresco* introspection and an even more curious trend of contemplation, even mysticism, born in the dead centre of the hurricane. St. Exupéry, Silone,

<sup>1</sup> *The Last Enemy*, p. 44.





E. Q. NICHOLSON. Coffee Pot. 1943

*Included in the United Aid to China Exhibition at Hertford House*



E. Q. NICHOLSON. Winter Cabbage. 1943

Traven, Hemingway, Malraux, Scholochow, Istrati may be the forerunners; and Hillary might have become one of them. But one slim volume, a packet of letters, two short stories are all that is left; and that is not enough to fill in the blank.

Thomas Mann says somewhere that to leave a trace behind him a writer must produce not only quality but bulk; the sheer bulk of the *œuvre* helps its impact on us. It is a melancholy truth; and yet this slim volume of Hillary's seems to have a specific weight which makes it sink into the depth of one's memory, while tons of printed bulk drift as flotsam on its surface.

## V

We started from the question: What makes this young author-pilot's life and death into a symbol? and have not answered it. For the question what ideas or values he represents must finally merge into that of the ideas and values latent in his generation and class. This is what he has to say about them:

'The seed of self-destruction among the more intellectual members of the University was even more evident. Despising the middle-class society to which they owed their education and position, they attacked it, not with vigour but with adolescent petulance. They were encouraged in this by their literary idols, by their unquestioning allegiance to Auden, Isherwood, Spender, and Day Lewis. With them they affected a dilettante political leaning to the left. Thus, while refusing to be confined by the limited outlook of their own class, they were regarded with suspicion by the practical exponents of labour as bourgeois, idealistic, pink in their politics and pale-grey in their effectiveness. They balanced precariously and with irritability between a despised world they had come out of and a despising world they couldn't get into. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

This is how he saw his background; but we get a curiously different impression of the atmosphere and of himself in a letter of condolence from the Vice-President of Trinity to Hillary's father:

' . . . Then Dick arrived with his great charm and great personality, and at the end of his first year he had achieved a feat which will go down to posterity . . . for he was the stroke of an VIII which was the best College VIII that has ever been seen, and which, in making five bumps to go to the head of the river . . . achieved a feat which is never likely to be eclipsed. In 1939 again, his indomitable spirit and skill kept us in the position which his leadership had won for us the year before. Then came this cruel war. . . .'

This, I suppose, is what one might call a counterpoint; but without it there would be no fugue. Auden and the five bumps complete each other in a singular way; without the bumps no

<sup>1</sup> *The Last Enemy*, p. 14.

Battle of Britain, without Auden no *The Last Enemy*. The very violence with which these youngsters reacted against their tradition proves how strong its hold on them still was. But tradition might act on a man in two ways: either as a sterilizing, or as a catalysing agent. With the majority the first is the case: Hillary belonged to that lucky minority to whom Shrewsbury plus Oxford becomes not a liability but a basic asset. This is how, in a few remarkably measured lines, he sums up what Oxford did to him:

'As it was, I read fairly widely, and, more important, learned a certain *savoir faire*, learned how much I could drink, how not to be gauche with women, how to talk to people without being aggressive or embarrassed, and gained a measure of confidence which would have been impossible for me under any other form of education.'<sup>1</sup>

And then, without transition, in between two bumps on the river—Pompeii. He was just learning 'a certain *savoir faire*', when:

'... Here in a clearing of the woods in Devon, I heard of the last flight of Richard Hillary. I sat in a stillness of the spirit and watched great hawks wheeling in the wind, poised to strike then suddenly swooping down upon their prey. So had he manœuvred his Spitfire, fearlessly braving elemental dangers and man-made devilries to keep us, and England, safe.'<sup>2</sup>

Another counterpoint. Our highbrow-hawk pulls a face—for in his own eyes it looked like this:

'... This then was the Oxford Generation which on September 3, 1939, went to war. . . . We were disillusioned and spoiled. The press referred to us as the Lost Generation and we were not displeased. Superficially we were selfish and egocentric without any Holy Grail in which we could lose ourselves. The war provided it, and in a delightfully palatable form. It demanded no heroics, but gave us the opportunity to demonstrate in action our dislike of organized emotion and patriotism, the opportunity to prove to ourselves and to the world that our effete veneer was not as deep as our dislike of interference, the opportunity to prove that, undisciplined though we might be, we were a match for Hitler's dogma-fed youth.'<sup>3</sup>

What meticulous efforts to keep a clean head and dodge *la gloire*! There are those who die with their boots clean, and those who die with their minds clean. For the former it is easier—their life and death is ruled by exclamation marks. For the Hillarys it is harder; their curriculum is punctuated by question-marks which they have to unbend, straighten, point all by themselves.

<sup>1</sup>*The Last Enemy*, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>From an appreciation (unpublished), by Lady Fortescue.

<sup>3</sup>*The Last Enemy*, pp. 28–29.



But the aim at which they point we can only guess. We can guess it, not from his formulations and ratiocinations, but from those parts in his writings where he is un-selfconscious and inarticulate. 'In an age when to love one's country is vulgar, to love God archaic, and to love mankind sentimental, you do all three', he says to Peter Pease—to the same Peter whom he admires most of all his friends, whose death he sees in a vision under the anæsthetic and whose memory becomes a cult and an obsession for him. And through that one sentence with its three disparaging adjectives, we get a glimpse into the concealed nostalgia, the *mal du siècle* of those who die with their minds clean.

For, in spite of all intellectual camouflage and nimbleness of formulation, one does not let one's body go up in flames thrice out of sheer 'dislike of organized emotion and patriotism'. It sounds all very well, and it is not true. But one does it—perhaps, if one is exceptionally sensitive and exceptionally brave, and if one caught the bug of the great nostalgia of one's time—in search of a redeeming emotion; of a credo, neither sentimental, vulgar nor archaic, whose words one could say without embarrassment or shame. When all isms become meaningless and the world an alley of crooked query-marks, then indeed a man's longing for the Holy Grail may become so strong that he flies like a moth into the flame; and having burned his wings, crawls back into it again. But this, of course, is the one instinct in man's condition which he can't rationalize.

Richard Hillary was burnt thrice. After the first time they brought him back and patched him up and made him a new face. It was wasted, for the second time his body was charred to coal. But to make quite sure that the pattern be fulfilled it was his wish to be cremated; so they burned him a third time, on the twelfth of January, 1943, in Golders Green; and the coal became ashes and the ashes were scattered into the sea.

There the man ends and the myth begins. It is the myth of the Lost Generation—sceptic crusaders, knights of effete veneer, sick with the nostalgia of something to fight for, which as yet is not. It is the myth of the crusade without a cross, and of desperate crusaders in search of a cross. What creed they will adopt, Christ's or Barrabas', remains to be seen.

# ROUND THE HORIZON

BARBARA WARD

## I—JOURNEY TO AMERICA

I AM glad I was born soon enough for a transatlantic flight still to be a matter for astonishment. We left Ireland after supper one evening, breakfasted in Newfoundland and reached Baltimore about tea-time. In a few years this schedule will be as normal as the night-train to Edinburgh—or as normal as it is already to youths of Ferry Command who were in the Fiji Islands last week and next week will be in Chungking. All the same, the astonishment is of the mind, not of the imagination. You have to tell yourself that you have gone so far in so short a time. Only then do you feel astonished. The journey itself is quite remarkably ordinary.

I think the nearest thing to it in day-to-day travel is the charabanc, but with much less to look at from the windows. The plane churns on, hour after hour. In dull weather the clouds are around, above and below; in clear the sea is as endless as the sky. In two crossings, one through Newfoundland, the other by Bermuda and Lisbon, only about three incidents stand out vividly against the back cloth of sun and cloud and water and empty space—a sunset off the coasts of Ireland with the cloud floor coloured gold and rose, the plane's under wing turned to mother-of-pearl and a full moon rising so that on each side of the aircraft we saw a different universe, one warm, bright and coloured, the other cold and radiant and white; the first sight of the New World, a faint outline of rocky coast and a thread of white breakers swimming in amber morning mists—*'les bords mystérieux du monde occidental'*, then, on the journey home, an empty ship's raft tossing below us, barely distinguishable, a white fleck on the dark Atlantic rollers, yet the only point breaking the monotony of endless sea outwards to the encircling horizon. For a moment we comfortable Clipper passengers had a salutary vision of the fate of many seamen who travel by less pampered routes. But these incidents stand alone. Otherwise, there is the

grinding drone of the engines, the stuffy air of the cabin, rather hard seats which grow hourly harder, desultory talk of fellow passengers, detective stories, half-hour dozes, stiffness in the legs and all the other pleasant or tiresome accompaniments of lengthy travel.

I think this contrast between the extraordinary fact of crossing the Atlantic in some fourteen hours and the very ordinary circumstances of the crossing helped me to understand a typical American state of mind. Many Americans today know that the aircraft has revolutionized their world. They know that in the day of the 'Liberator' and the 'Lancaster' distance is annihilated and that all political conceptions built on space have to be revised. But they know these things with that superficial part of the mind which in my case realized that it was extraordinary to fly the Atlantic. But the part of their mental apparatus Wordsworth would have called their 'feeling intellect' is still unaware. The fact of space being annihilated and of there being, as Wendell Willkie told them 'no distant points any more', is not yet effective in their imagination, just as I never managed to *feel* as well as know that I had made an astonishing journey. This is one of the limiting conditions, in what might justifiably be called the Great Debate, the controversy which overshadows every other issue in the United States and whose outcome will be decisive in world history. Time and time again, on my journeyings through the country, the issue of isolationism or world co-operation came up without any soliciting from me. It is a sort of leitmotiv to the tour. All thoughtful citizens are preoccupied by it. Selfish and reactionary citizens are maddened by it. Ordinary folk are bewildered by it. But no one can evade it and the shifting and regrouping and strengthening or weakening of power and opinion behind the chief protagonists in this debate is the core of American politics.

Yet it is not easy to catch up the main threads. Issues as remote as the governmental fixing of wages for Mexican farm workers have their implications for the final alignment of forces. Statements as direct as Mr. Wallace's 'Century of the Common Man' are probably less significant than the War Veterans' vote in Kansas City last September for 'some form of international organization for peace'. Some of the most important decisions do not appear in public at all. For example, the non-election of the

isolationist Shroeder to the Chairmanship of the Republican Party was decided in a hotel bedroom after hours of private bargaining and lobbying carried late into the night. The division of opinion does not follow accepted political or social cleavages. Not all New Dealers are internationalists. Many ultra-conservative Southern Democrats are. The Republican Party is split. One of the great internationalist forces of the early twentieth century, the Protestant communions, whose missionary work first directed America's imagination overseas, are now divided and weakened by the issue of pacifism. Catholic opinion is torn between the Church's teaching on the State's duty towards international society and the Pope's appeals for a co-operative world-order on the one hand and, on the other, the Irishman's antipathy to the British Empire and the average Catholic's distrust of Russia.

If recent polls are to be believed, there is a preponderance of internationalist feeling among the educated classes. This may well be so. I have the impression that there is little in America to correspond to the degree of international awareness and interest characteristic of the British working classes. A great mass of the American workers are men who succeeded in getting away from Europe—in Cleveland, for example, eighty per cent of the population are of foreign-born parents and forty per cent were actually born outside the United States. The energies of many of the most vigorous personalities in the Labour movement are still absorbed by critical problems of unionism. Recently, it is true, the unsettled rivalry between the C.I.O. and the A.F. of L. was sunk in a wartime alliance, but it is a negative alliance, an alliance against the anti-Labour tendencies of a Congress in which co-operation between Republican Congressmen and the reactionary Southern Democrats threatens the New Deal's pro-Labour legislation; incidentally, the alliance is probably directed against John Lewis as well. After taking himself and his mine-workers out of the C.I.O., he seems to be hell-bent on building himself up a third Empire of union power by swallowing up all the available areas—they are large—of non-unionized labour. The recent strike in Pennsylvania is a good example of the reason why no coherent lead on the fundamental issue of America's world relations can be expected from the ranks of Labour. John Lewis, who runs his Union like an oriental autocrat, has an arrangement with the



anthracite mining companies to have union dues deducted from the miners' wages before they get their pay-packets. He and the companies recently raised the dues. The men protested that the reserve fund of the United Mine Workers' Union was over seven million dollars. They were not going to be docked of more money to swell a fund which they suspected Lewis would use to fight the other unions and finance his recruiting campaign among the farm workers. The men then struck—to the great embarrassment of the war effort—against their union officials and the companies.

Since the Great Debate runs across the ordinary social and political categories and since, in any case, there are few generalizations about America which will not sooner or later catch the generalizer out, I can only pick up a thread of it here and there—a talk, a meeting, a piece of newsprint. But each individual instance can be multiplied thousands of times, for a great number of Americans do the same things and have the same reactions; and from each experiences, the thread of the debate stretches back into many homes and many communities, is inextricably bound up with the threads of other hopes and fears and winds in and out with them to form the complicated fabric of public opinion.

One of the most significant assemblies with which I came in contact was a conference held by the Federation of Democratic Women's Clubs for one of the Middle Western States. The women had come together in the State capital, a tidy prosperous town built on a hill round the State Government buildings, a replica of the Capitol at Washington, looking down to the river plain where a rich harvest ripened. The Conference was held—as usual—in a large hotel, the bedrooms given over to visitors or transformed into committee rooms, the lobby full of energetic officials giving information, arranging for outings, distributing literature and selling Victory Bonds; and in the dining room a ceaseless series of meetings, large and small, to discuss, in this case, every aspect of the Party's work in the State. The Conference represented some of the solidest, most hard-working and conscientious women in the State, probably, too, the most idealistic members of the Party—the more sordid work is left to the men. The meeting which I had to address was a plenary session over lunch—which I need hardly say consisted of fried chicken and ice-cream. About three hundred women gathered round the

E-shaped table, women who helped in each community to mould opinion, women who took their responsibilities as members of a self-governing community seriously. Shall we ever know how much the survival of free governments depends upon their type? It is so easy to be malicious—about the earnestness, the self-importance, the astonishing rituals which all such conventions have developed—marches, salutes to the flag, committee reports, State songs, election of representatives all performed with conventional solemnity; but these are the unimportant trappings of a central fact, that in most American cities, particularly in cities where the growth of population has not tended to swamp the citizen, the community and responsibility to the community are facts accepted by enough citizens to make self-government work. As I sat there and looked round at all the earnest faces beneath their varying degrees of make-up and of fantastic head-gear, I thought I saw the homely, vigorous, anonymous face of democracy.

It was at this meeting that I first came across the maps which I came later to recognize as one of the significant themes of the Great Debate. I was preceded at the speech-making by a professor from the State University, head of the adult education services in that part of the Union. He carried two maps with him. These were slung up behind our chairs. On one was the old Mercator projection—America an isolated continent protected on either flank by the vast stretches of the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. This is the picture which has moulded the mind of America for five generations. The child in the schoolroom gets more isolationism from those two expanses of water than Colonel MacCormick and his *Chicago Tribune*—the most flagrant and notorious Isolationist newspaper in the States—can ever insinuate into the adult mind. There are Americans who declare that both MacCormick and Hearst are Isolationist far more as salesmen than as ideologues. They simply estimated what dominant political beliefs had been absorbed by children from their school history and geography, calculated that the mental age of a large part of their reading public would remain at about twelve years old and proceeded to give this public the picture its schooldays had left behind—with the Britain of George III and of the war of 1812 as the big boggy and the oceans as twin guarantees of irresponsible security.

Our professor's other map was a polar projection. The map centred on the North Pole. The audience could imagine themselves peering down on the world from an Arctic aircraft. Below the land mass stretched, with only the brief interruption of the Behring Straits, from Narvik to Patagonia. The Japanese islands on one side, the Scandinavian peninsula on the other, painted black to signify Axis control, pointed directly at the heart of America, at the Middle West, at the great iron deposits of Duluth, at the steel plants of Pittsburg and the automobile industry of Detroit. Few contrasts could be more absolute than those two maps. The professor's speech rubbed the contrast home. 'There are no frontiers in the air,' he told the women; 'in the age of air transport, Eurasia is nothing more than an extension of Pan-America.'

I remembered his talk when, a few weeks later, Willkie flew home from Moscow via Alaska and entered the United States after a world tour, not via Chicago's Golden Gate or New York's Statue of Liberty, but across the Minnesotan border to Minneapolis, his first stop the heart of the Middle West on the banks of the Mississippi. Did these Middle Western women remember too? When they reported to their town committee on the results of the Conference? Over the evening's knitting or bridge? At town meetings? After Sunday Service? I think so. The professor and I were besieged after our two—naturally complementary—talks. 'We need bombs to wake us up.' 'We have to get our people to feel we are right in this war.' 'We are not going to make the same mistake as last time.' And, as an undercurrent, 'Thank you for that *inspirational* talk.'

I found the maps next on a journey to the mountain States, in the study of the Chancellor of a University there. It is my strong impression that however much in the past the Middle West and the Mountain States—Colorado, Idaho, Wyoming, Nevada, Utah—may have been the home of Isolationism, the trend of opinion is altering sharply. My own impression of the East, the supposed home of interventionism, is that opinion is somewhat dominated by the weight and prestige of the two great cities, New York and Washington, and here opinion has little time to be matured and deliberated at the corner store or over the Rotarian lunch or round the family supper table. As a result it tends to follow the headlines which, like the man in the negro spiritual,

are 'Sometimes up and sometimes down'. There is inherent instability in this day-to-day reaction to the news. There is irresponsibility. There can be hysteria. I never heard Britain so praised or so blamed as in the East. During the bombing of London, even the British living quietly in New York found they were heroes. I arrived soon after the fall of Tobruk. I have been asked point blank why Americans should lend-lease weapons to a people too yellow to use them.

The Middle Westerners did not seem to me to fall into this senseless agitation. When they were Isolationist they were so not because they disliked this or that neighbour but because they thought they were safe. Now it is facts—Pearl Harbour, the aeroplane—not phobias that are compelling them to modify their views. They are doing so slowly and deliberately. It is easy to generalize and idealize; but I felt more at home in the Middle West townships. The people there in cities and villages which their fathers helped to hack out of the wilderness are still near enough to physical calamity to react simply and directly to a social calamity like war. A flood, a mining accident, a dust storm are part of many men's experience. Such crises have always been met by community action. It is the same with war. The Middle States, Kansas and Nebraska, are ahead in bond buying, in scrap collecting, in recruiting. Geographically remote from disaster, they are traditionally nearer to it and more self-reliant in facing it.

I had felt all this instinctively long before William Allen White, the grand old man of American journalism, sat with me on his back porch in Emporia, Kansas, and helped to make my beliefs explicit by his tales of Middle Western reactions and hopes and ideals. At the age of twenty-five he purposely abandoned journalism in the big city—Chicago—and went to the township of Emporia to edit its *Gazette*, believing that by influencing profoundly the thought of a few men he could do more than by flicking the emotions of a mass. From him, I got the judgment of a shrewd and gentle old man, who had watched his people through fifty odd years of political vicissitudes, that Isolationism was dying in the Middle West. Corner store opinion, he said, the most informed and steady opinion in America, was veering to the view that the United States had to take a hand.

It is influential opinion too—the population statistics of America



with the preponderance they give to the East are misleading on most issues of foreign policy. The Senate is decisive in all far-reaching modifications of America's relations with other States. In the Senate, the empty mountain States, Nevada, for example, with only 70,000 inhabitants, vote equally with New York's millions. Each State sends its two Senators, and since the mountain States tend to return the same Senator to Congress, session in, session out, and since the influential chairmanship of the Senate's committees goes by seniority, a senator from Nebraska or Wyoming or Idaho has a fair chance of obtaining decisive influence. This is the chief reason why if policy is to be effective in the United States it has to be endorsed in the great stretch of land between the Alleghenies and the Continental Divide. And once endorsed by these States, it tends to stay so. The pendulum swings are for the great cities. When the Middle West abandons Isolationism, it will have done so for good.

To return to the Chancellor of the University with the new polar map on his study wall, he carried his gospel of worldwide collaboration far further than a simple belief that Isolationism would no longer work. For him it had become the crime against the Holy Spirit. The great forces of the future were working for world unity, he proclaimed, his dark eyes gleaming with prophetic enthusiasm. The Russians, the Chinese, the Turks were proving that education could open every door to mankind, nothing would hold up the march of the common people (except perhaps the conservatism of a decaying British Empire?) towards a victorious future. 'The future is with Russia and China', he declared, 'look at their size, their vastness. They have barely started to exploit their resources. Our Anglo-American world is too small, our outlook too parochial. Only the United Nations' concept is wide enough to embrace the energies of the free peoples.'

This man came of Protestant missionary stock—his father was for many years president of a well-known American foundation in the Middle East—and in him the zeal which sent 30,000 young American missionaries overseas, mainly to the Far East, in the early part of this century burnt up again in purely secular terms. Incidentally it is this missionary link which partly explains the United States' boundless sympathy for China. Mr. Henry Luce, whose *Time-Life-Fortune* chain is putting across a consistent

line in support of American participation in world government, was born in China of missionary parents. Unhappily, as I have said before, this particular source of vital internationalist feeling has been drained away between the wars by the development of dogmatic pacifism. It is usually where men have lost the religious side of their tradition that the world vision remains. Unhappily, again, it then tends to a naïve Utopianism which can be almost as great an obstacle to the working out of concrete plans for co-operation as the straight opposition of hoary reactionaries. In my Chancellor, for example, I kept feeling that here was a sort of inverted 'Wave of the Future', the phrase coined some years ago by Anne Morrow Lindbergh to express the inevitable triumph of Fascism. A world government compatible with democratic freedom may indeed be realizable but no wave of time or fate will bring it—only hard thought and the patient work of millions of men.

I met the maps again among the farming people of Iowa. Des Moines is a memorable town. It is the home of Mr. Henry Wallace. His plant breeding station, where he has evolved his own brand of cross-bred corn, stands just outside the town and the local people, even when they do not approve of Wallace's politics, have their pride in the local boy become a national figure. He is believed to be the farmers' friend, and this gives his dicta on world politics weight even with those who vote Republican—and Iowa has just returned a Republican Governor. Des Moines has a remarkable newspaper, the *Register-Tribune*. Edited by one of the ablest and shrewdest American journalists, W. W. Waymack, the paper has steadily educated its town and farming readers to a realization of international issues and has done a probably unequalled job of public enlightenment.

All round the city lie the fertile fields and solid farms of the richest agricultural area in the Union. Here, in the words of D. W. Brogan, corn is turned into fat via the hog. It is an area of mixed farming, dairy, livestock and grain. The farms—the average is, I believe, about 500 acres—are well built in wood, with sturdy farm buildings and well-fenced fields. It is a treeless land. The fields stretch out across the plain, broken only by the outline of gable, barn and silo, acre after acre of Indian corn, white in the simmering heat of noonday, golden and amethyst

at sunset, criss-crossed by dust roads running straight to the horizon. To anyone used to the patchwork of English fields and the endless variety of our countryside, this vast expanse of fertility stretching without a break across the heart of a continent is impressive but disquieting. It is an unsheltered land. I have not seen it struck by tornado or cloudburst or deep snow, but I can imagine the terror and desolation.

This background removes the farmers very far from the mental outlook of the alarm-clock-subway-cafeteria-conditioned big town dweller. I think my chief impression of staying out on one of the farms was that everyone, including the sixteen-year-old boy who drove the tractor and milked the cows and fed the cattle and the twelve-year-old girl whose concern was chickens and pigs, was very busy and would be busier when harvest came. Yet at the same time there was space and leisure for meeting and discussion and thought. Here in the district where I stayed, the farmers had organized their own forum for considering local and national problems and I was taken to one of their evening meetings. Thirty men and women first sat down to a solid supper of baked ham—then came the discussion. The chairman—a very capable, slow-moving, sure-thinking farmer in his middle forties—introduced me as the guest in a unique address that deserves recording. He explained that although in general they hoped to be able to pick my brains, they hoped I would put my own questions and make the evening a really co-operative effort. 'In fact,' he went on, 'this reminds me of my friend, Si Brown, who paid \$2,000 to buy a bull for breeding. His neighbours were so curious to see the beast that they kept crowding around. So Si charged them 25 cents a time. One afternoon, when the crowd had gone, he found a seedy looking man hanging about. "Want to see the bull?" said Si. "Sure I want to see the bull," said the loafer. "Got 25 cents?" "No, I ain't got no 25 cents. How should I have 25 cents to see a bull, me out of work and with fifteen children?" "Fifteen children? Come right in, neighbour, I want the bull to see you."'

The discussion lasted three hours and it turned on three issues: had the twenty inter-war years and Pearl Harbour proved that Isolationism was dead: what kind of world order could America help to build: what could they as responsible citizens of Dallas County, Iowa, do about it? For the first, there was speedy and

unanimous agreement. 'We do see that the old policy was no good. We do see that America has got to do something different.' For the second, long argument. And here the maps appeared again. One burly farmer explained in his broad Iowan speech that he had seen somewhere, he couldn't remember where, a map showing how America and Asia really ran together and how easy it would be to run a road from Moscow to Chicago. 'I reckon the Alaska Road would be a piece of it.' This led to the suggestion that one form of world co-operation would be American participation in international public works. Editor Waymack, who was at the meeting, explained how the existing Reconstruction Finance Corporation might be changed into an International Finance Corporation. The farmers could see that any means of raising world prosperity would benefit them, but scratched their heads over the problem: 'Who is to pay for it?'

Their thinking clearly sought concrete, economic images. For world political government their interest was vague and reactions uncertain—some sort of United Nations Council? Nor were they in the least interested in frontier problems in Europe. How to co-operate through promoting world prosperity and how America, while bearing the chief economic responsibility, could avoid being exploited by the indigent nations—these were the questions on which the discussion turned. On the short-term issue of physical relief in devastated areas there was no division of opinion at all. The farmers assumed that it would be done and that their Herculean efforts in the harvest fields would help to do it. Perhaps their most interesting reaction was the need they felt to educate opinion on the issue of world co-operation. They agreed to devote their autumn forums to carrying on the discussion and to arrange public meetings in the county. The chairman closed the talk on a solemn note. 'We have a big job to do. We are free citizens and it's up to us. We are trying to see our problems straight and we have to help our neighbours along the same road.' I caught an echo of the Second Inaugural—'doing the right as God gives us to see the right.'

From Wallace's farmers to Wallace himself—a small dinner in Washington at which both the Vice-President and his



right-hand man, Milo Perkins, were present. They are a curious contrast, Henry Wallace, shy and reserved with his thatch of greying hair and bushy eyebrows, Perkins smooth-haired, open-faced, self-assured, keen-eyed. At this dinner, Wallace's guests do most of the talking. The Vice-President listens acutely, his humorous intelligent eyes darting from face to face, not a word or a glance or an intonation escaping him. If any point strikes him particularly, he breaks in, 'You've got something there', and the remark is absorbed into the active brain. Milo Perkins is impressive. A business man from Texas, he abandoned his work to come to Washington in the early days of the New Deal to devote himself to it wholeheartedly. Now, older, wiser, shrewder, perhaps, but neither disillusioned nor dismayed, he carries on his work. He, of all the New Dealers, tends to speak a language the business community can understand. For example, he urges them to accept the continuance of Governmental control after the war, not for the sake of control but because they cannot afford to have the Government—which buys about seven-tenths of their production—suddenly withdraw from the market and leave private enterprise to fill an annual gap of \$80 millions.

At the dinner, where there is naturally no debate on whether there should be co-operation, the talk turns on international co-operation and the forms in which it will be acceptable to American opinion. The chief difficulty is to cure people of their distrust of Government 'pump-priming', as they call it. Can international loans be seen as productive investment? Many of these loans, particularly those devoted to schemes for electrification or transport, can be self-liquidating. For the others, the simple fact must be got across that the prosperity of other peoples pays. Can the American business man be cured of the belief that exports are more important for curing unemployment than rising consumption at home? If not, how can the Government prevent the rise of a new competitive imperialism masked as 'Free Trade'? Can the American worker be cured of the belief that each new immigrant is a threat to his standard of living? Can the people at large be taught that no country can repay its debts to America except in goods and services? The list of queries lengthens. We begin to see the thornier side of the Great Debate—the thickets of ignorance and prejudice through which the Liberal statesmen have to thread their way. It is not enough that a majority of

Americans should feel convinced of the need for world co-operation. Means and methods must be discovered which are compatible with American traditions and ways of thinking and they must be discovered in the midst of a smoke screen of adverse and misleading criticism thrown out by the small, but influential vocal group of Isolationists.

I have tried so far to pick out from my three month journey points at which an emergent feeling for world co-operation touched the surface of thought and conversation. It would take too long to repeat the method for the Isolationist side of the argument. Perhaps two incidents are sufficient illustration, the first a dinner party in Lake Forest. Lake Forest is Chicago's Gold Coast, the pine-studded shores of Lake Erie on which stand the great homes of those who have cornered wheat and beef, manipulated the Exchanges, forestalled, regraded or performed other services to the public. We dined in one of these houses about a month before the November elections—an exquisite meal moving with slow ritual from consommé to dessert, from cocktails and sherry to liqueur brandy, a universe away from rationing and shortage. Yet it was a disgruntled meal. The women had a great deal to say about the servant problem. High wages in war industry have thinned the ranks of domestic servants. Some of the women said that the wages were disgraceful and the topic developed—with much animation—into the question of labour in general. All were agreed that the President was 'pampering' labour. While the income of the community as a whole was being docked by increased taxation, the share of the workers was rising. 'The most irresponsible element in the community is being encouraged', declared one man impressively through a mouthful of lobster, 'The Administration warns us about inflation but keeps up the steady pressure of rising wages on the price level. We'll believe they want to check inflation when they freeze wages.' A query about limiting incomes to \$25,000 was dismissed, however. It was 'communistic' and designed to ruin the middle classes and the business community who had built up America. 'The American Way', one of the guests explained to me, 'has been to encourage independent producers to go out and produce. If they make a lot of money, the nation profits by it and the men get work and the standard of living



Landscape with Figures—VI

# THE BRITISH COUNCIL

THE COLLEGE, SOUTH LEIGH, WITNEY, OXON

1st March, 1943

Sir,

It is one of the functions of the British Council to make discriminating presentations of books to institutions and (to a lesser extent) individuals in the Empire, in foreign countries and among the Allied fighting forces and merchant seamen in the United Kingdom. Most of these presentations are books in English, but there is a great need of books of every type in Arabic, Chinese, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Modern Greek, Norwegian, Polish, Serbo-Croat and Urdu. The supply of fiction and popular general books in French is not inadequate but standard works (including advanced textbooks) in all subjects in French are required. Translations into any of these languages of English standard works and literary classics would be particularly welcome.

May we appeal to your readers to send us any such books which they can spare? They should not be addressed to the Council's offices in London but to: The British Council (Foreign Books), The College, South Leigh, near Witney, Oxon., and postage or carriage will be gladly refunded.

Yours truly,

JOHN HAMPDEN

*Director,*

*Books and Periodicals Department,  
British Council*

The Editor,  
Horizon



risers. But if you quarter their gains by taxation, what inducement have they to produce? And what is the alternative? An overgrown political bureaucracy such as we already have in Washington which is a conspiracy against the public, a hive of jobs for incompetents and the home of dictatorship. The New Deal is destroying the American Way of Life and Roosevelt is using this war to hurry up the process.'

On this, general agreement. Each had a quite personal dislike for the President. I had the impression that a few of them still looked on the war as 'his war' and were rather glad the British were doing badly because they were 'his allies'. Impossible here to disentangle the domestic and the international issue. They were obviously divided on the issue of Isolationism, but Roosevelt's support for world co-operation tended to make it suspect. Was it another New Deal racket? For Henry Wallace's 'Century of the Common Man' there was general contempt. An opinion voiced later at the National Association of Manufacturers Conference came from a vigorous red-faced old gentleman at the end of the table 'Does he think I'm working to give half a glass of milk to every Hottentot? No, sir.' But there was internationalism of a kind, especially among the younger men. They followed Mr. Luce in *Fortune*. They believed in America's productive genius and in their duty to sell abroad and thus 'raise other people's living standards'. Obstacles to the outward flow of American goods they regarded as 'selfish imperialism'. Ottawa gleamed in their eyes, but perhaps on account of my presence, they did not at this point enlarge on the theme of 'breaking the British monopoly'. I did not gather that they understood, or, if they did, had any sympathy for the dilemma of other producing nations if America sold widely but refused to buy. I think my fellow guests were all Protectionists. No, there was one a hundred per cent free trader, who, however, tried to convert the dinner table by explaining that the Americans had everything to gain by free trade since they could undersell any industrial nation anywhere.

Politically, the guests divided between complete withdrawal, on the one hand—a small but virulent minority. 'The United States is not involved physically. We haven't been bombed, have we? The Japs aren't going to land, are they? If only we stay home and don't meddle, Russia will look after Europe and

China can deal with the Japs, once we've licked them;' and, on the other, the 'biggest of everything' school of thought. The United States should maintain the largest army, navy and air force and knock hell out of anyone who tried to break the peace. Its first job would be to keep Germany down. All this talk about using America's economic power to raise up the Germans was dangerous nonsense. Hadn't America filled up Weimar Germany with loans, and what had been the result?—Hitler. Never again.

After dinner, we went out into the back veranda above a moonlit garden running down to the lake's edge. Far out on the water, we could see the winking lights of the massive ore barges carrying the iron down to Michigan and Ohio to be moulded into instruments of war. From there they would be shipped to Britain, perhaps, or by the Murmansk convoy to Russia's fighting front. The Great Lakes, Chicago, even these business people were all part of the long chain of working and fighting on which victory would depend and, unhappily, the peace afterwards. The chain is, after all, no stronger than its weakest link.

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Without comment, from the *Washington Star*:

'The spate of European political intrigues which we have had since we entered North Africa has been enough to cure some of the inveterate interventionists in European affairs. Our Army and Diplomatic officers, who enjoyed the full confidence of the people of this country and of their Commander-in-Chief have been criticized. If the Russians feel that they could bring peace to a continent that has been at war for centuries so much the better for all concerned.

'Recent developments have shown we can deal with Russians in a friendly manner even more successfully than with others of our close friends and associates. One thing appears certain: we shall have no major disputes with Moscow over economic zones of influence or the air routes of the world.'

Again without comment, from the *Washington Times Herald*:

'It looks to us as if the big 1944 issue may be internationalism v. nationalism. The four freedomers and Willkie are urging us to go all-out for internationalism—down with tariffs and immigration restrictions, and let's buy happiness for the world

even if we pauperize ourselves. No other Allied leaders are thinking this way. Mr. Churchill is thinking first of Great Britain, and proudly admits it. Stalin is thinking first of Russia. We have it on good authority that Stalin's post-war price, in event of Allied victory, is Russian recovery of Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and a big piece of Poland—the old Czarist Russian geographical setup. Chiang Kai-shek is certainly thinking of China first. And why not? Why, further, must the United States always be the world patsy, forgetting its own interests and eternally trying to save a world which shows little or no preference for our brand of salvation? . . . In the Presidential election of 1944, the Republicans should be able to put up quite a fight on this issue of internationalism *v.* nationalism. A lot of Americans by that time are likely to be fed up with these endless proposals that we give everybody in the world a quart of milk a day, deliver it, and pay for it. Any Presidential candidate who promises to think about American interests first, to act on those thoughts, should be attractive to a considerable number of American voters by 1944.'

The *Washington Times Herald* is one of a notorious trio of Isolationist, anti-New Deal newspapers, MacCormick's *Chicago Tribune*, Joe Patterson's *New York Daily News* and his sister, Cissie Patterson's, *Times Herald*. The *Washington Star* is, however, an innocuous evening paper for Civil Servants.

The day the results of the November elections appeared I was in Washington. It was a day to remember—the first of a long Indian Summer which went its golden way to the very edge of winter. The Fall is not like autumn. It is not the dying year. There seems to be no connection between death and decay and the riot of colours descending on woods and hills. The sumach is scarlet, the maples golden and rose, the scrub oak burnt sienna, the shadows purple, the distance amethyst under a hot blue Mediterranean sky. But I was not concerned with the Fall's glories on this particular day in November. I was considering the election results, in the company of a young newspaper man and with considerable gloom. My friends at the Lake Forest dinner party—all Republicans incidentally—had clearly gained a lead. The Democratic majority was down to ten, and even this

figure was misleading, for among the Democrats were many Congressmen—from the South—whose outlook was far more conservative than that of most Republicans.

My friend was bitter about the result. 'This election is one of the biggest frauds in our recent political history. All through the year, the Republicans have fixed on every muddle or breakdown connected with the job of gearing up to total war, and pinned the blame on the President. What democracy ever got into total war without trouble, anyway? And who has been the biggest obstacle, the President, who tried to get us ready two years ago or the Republicans, who crabbed every step in our war preparations? They have managed to shelve completely the issue of isolationism—which proved that the President was right and they were wrong. Instead the slogan is "Not pre-war Isolationists but pre-war bunglers" and the bunglers are, of course, the Administration. No democracy likes war control, but the President is even taking kicks for not fortifying Guam when Congress threw out his proposal in 1936.'

I asked about the size and composition of the vote. 'The lightest vote on record—and why? Because the mass of ordinary people are either fighting on Guadalcanal or making munitions in towns where they are not registered as voters. Roosevelt's voting strength always was the "forgotten man", the little chap who got his social security card. Now the forgotten men are more forgotten than ever before, in the trenches and on the assembly lines. The vote against Roosevelt is a middle class, anti-New Deal vote. He must always lose on a light vote since his is mass support.'

'Does it mean another Warren Gamaliel Harding in 1944?'

I asked. He would not prophesy.

Neither can I. The November elections were not a Republican landslide, whatever the Republican Press may have claimed. But they have dangerously weakened the President's position in Congress. But on the basic issue of the Great Debate for and against American participation in world society, the division between parties is not clear cut. The Democrats by and large support intervention but might be stampeded into Isolationism if politics were to take a dangerously reactionary turn in America. The Republicans, on the other hand, in the person of Wendell Willkie, of Governor Stassen of Minnesota, of the Luces, include



some of the most vigorous internationalists in America. In certain circumstances, however, they might be driven to make common cause with an imperialist big business outlook.

Thus the outcome of the Great Debate hangs on a balance of delicate forces, part internal, part international. At one side the mass of American citizens are feeling their way towards co-operation, on the other, a limited but effective group is striving to swing them back to habitual Isolationism. Somewhere in between, the politicians, the administrators, the party workers shift under the impact of the rival pressures. there is a tug of war dragging this way and that below the surface of political life. But again it is only possible to pick out a few of the stresses which may determine the final balance of power. Here are two, one internal, the relationship between the three great producer blocs, farmers, employers and workers; the other external, the problem of relations with Britain and the question of imperialism.

The farmers are the centre point of the internal problem. As I learnt in Iowa, the more informed and intelligent farming groups are tending strongly away from Isolationism, although their picture of what should take its place is far from clear and, on the economic side, tends to be dominated by the question 'Who will pay for it?' In the past, the farmers have constituted an independent group, distrustful both of organized labour and of big business and making up their own minds slowly but certainly on issues of home and foreign politics. There are disquieting signs that this relative independence—which was incidentally a safeguard against the development of rigid economic class attitudes—is being weakened by the emergence of new trends in agriculture. The farmers are very conscious of the 'labour squeeze'. The war industries with their high wage level have drained the land of men, and it is at this time of manpower shortage, that John Lewis has apparently decided to launch his campaign for the large scale unionization of farm labour. Moved by a growing hostility to the demands of the workers, the farmers are turning a more sympathetic ear to the claims of big business to represent the 'rights of property'. In the past, the foreclosure of mortgages on bankrupt family farms and the passing of the land to the control of insurance companies, holding companies, public utility companies and the like, kept the farming

class hostile to the encroachments of business men. Now the movement is towards a joint and illiberal farmer-business front which can only have unfavourable results on the outlook for internationalism. The National Association of Manufacturers—America's F.B.I.—went on record against world economic co-operation at their December Conference in New York. The business leaders are quite shrewd enough to be able to transform the farmers' unsolved doubts about the financing of international co-operation into a settled conviction that the outside world is having Uncle Sam for a sucker. If the N.A.M., not President Roosevelt or Vice-President Wallace, are to give the farmers their lead, it may well be back into the ways of political Isolationism and economic war.

The kind of leadership the farmers will get depends in part on the outcome of an unresolved struggle for power within the ranks of the Republican Party. One section of the Party stands for the attitude very fairly expressed in the *Times Herald* leader I have already quoted. Mr. Willkie, Mr. Stassen, and many younger Republicans stand at the opposite pole. They want world government, based on the United Nations, world economic collaboration, the Four Freedoms, the Atlantic—and a Pacific—Charter. They believe in the Common Man. Many of their speeches are almost verbally indistinguishable from Mr. Wallace's. They love freedom and they hate imperialism and their war aim is 'independence for the free peoples everywhere'. Their idealism is fresh and genuine and can awake a chord in the heart of most Americans. Mr. Willkie's trip round the world fired men's imagination. His picture of the peoples of Asia rising up in pursuit of freedom and literacy and better living standards was vivid enough to strike home—'All over Asia, the people are opening the books'. Among his listeners there must have been many who remembered with sudden pride the schoolhouse in the American wilderness, built from logs as the pioneers staked out their claims or hacked their farms from the forest.

I think we tend to forget how young a nation the Americans are. Their history only runs back some three hundred years and each decade of it is steeped in the struggle for individual freedom. Whether it was the men of the Mayflower or of the Covered Wagon, they were looking for new horizons—and incidentally

escaping the confining limits of the old by flight. Freedom is the central theme. When the President defines American war aims he naturally turns to the idea of 'Four Freedoms'. When the New Dealers and the Liberals think of State intervention they think of it in terms of economic freedom and equality. When the Conservatives attack State intervention, they do so in the name of 'free enterprise'. Americans, even the most reactionary, think of themselves as a young nation, free, equal, and facing towards the future.

Today the old frontiers are closed—the Atlantic frontier of the Puritans, the Western frontier of the nineteenth-century pioneers. This has left an uncomfortable gap in the nation's psyche. If it were filled, we might witness again an overwhelming outbreak of dynamic energy. I feel that the Wallaces, the Willkies and the Stassens, with their picture of a world order in which the peoples of the earth walk in freedom, prosperity and peace, could succeed in creating the myth of a new frontier, a frontier that knows no limits, the 'frontier of human welfare', a phrase coined, significantly, by a conservative statesman, Mr. Sumner Welles.

A new 'myth' is sorely needed to fill the emotional vacuum left by the disappearance of the frontier in internal politics and Isolationism in foreign policy, both within a generation. The two things are actually aspects of the same reality, the no longer self-sufficient America. And the need for a new mental and emotional pattern springs from the inescapable fact that the broad determinants of national policy are instinctive rather than rational. It is not enough, as I argued at the beginning, for Americans to know that their world has shrunk. They must feel it in their bones, and it is exactly this that Mr. Willkie with his worldwide journey and Mr. Wallace with his vision of the common man as a universal figure and Mr. Welles with his new concept of the frontier is helping the average American citizen to do—to think with his heart, with his 'feeling intellect'.

It is impossible to say yet whether new and effective thought patterns are being formed; but it is possible to see how greatly the British people can assist or hinder a process so vital to their own future. Now the average American does not think of Great Britain or the British Empire as part of the great vanguard of mankind. Mr. Willkie does not think so. I doubt if Mr. Wallace

does. It is a true but awful reflection that the most popular film in America about Britain at war was *Mrs. Minniver*, the most popular book *The White Cliffs*, both excellent, no doubt, but mirroring a Britain of county families and flower-shows and accepted hierarchies and nostalgic memories of a feudal past and bearing as little relation to the prodigies of the British industrial war and peace effort as *The Road to Morocco* bears to the Allied campaign in North Africa. This is the old, traditional conservative, encrusted Britain that descends unbroken from George III and in token of this direct inheritance still keeps India and other groaning millions 'under the colonial yoke'. I am not exaggerating. This is not an unfair description of popular belief. 'Can't you persuade your aristocrats to relax their hold on Malaya?' I was asked after a lecture. The questioner was the wife of a University professor. As for India, I found it the very heart of the Imperial controversy.

Yet this Britain, whose thousand years of history, moated granges and ducal coronets, imperial heritage, conservative habits and self-assurance, all tend to set on edge the teeth of a younger, rawer, brasher, less confident America, is the nation with which, if international co-operation is to be effective at all, Americans must co-operate. It is between Britain and America that pooling has gone furthest. The Joint Boards and Joint Agencies and International Supply Centres which can be concrete growing points for a world order are all Anglo-American. British and American officials are working together, British and American soldiers fighting together. Theirs is the closest comradeship of work and arms in the history of man; but it is weakened and disrupted every time our British policy and outlook confirm and underline and rub in America's traditional prejudices against us. It follows that Britain can do as much as any force internal to America to weaken the Liberal wing of both the Democratic and Republican Parties, to complicate the task of Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Wallace, of Mr. Willkie and Mr. Stassen and to stifle the emergence of new, co-operative, world-ranging ways of thought.

If we snap back at Mr. Willkie with a 'What we have withheld,' if we fail to group our varied and admittedly progressive pronouncements on colonial policy into an ordered Charter for the Colonial Peoples, if we ban the Beveridge Report for the



Army and muffle it in Parliament, if we give no lead in chartering our new democracy, if we give no indication of bold and constructive plans for the restoration of Europe, if we do not make a frontal attack on the problems of international economic co-operation—if, in a word, we abandon the initiative and drift along in a negative and captious frame of mind, then the progressive forces in America will be all the more easily defeated and isolationism will re-emerge simply for lack of a positive policy and a compelling 'myth' to take its place.

It is not much to ask of Britain. The American people are ready to give us the most generous and unstinted admiration whenever the mask of old age and hardening arteries is put off and the face beneath appears young and vigorous and unafraid. The Britain of the bombing stirred every American heart. The Britain of the Second Front, the Britain of the New Democracy, the Britain of the Completed Commonwealth can do so again, and by creating a partnership within which the Americans would feel their own energies released and their idealism stimulated, prepare that sure foundation without which world order will never be built up.

## II—LETTER FROM IRELAND

DEAR CYRIL,

I promised you a letter from Ireland, and a letter I'm afraid it will have to be. I want rather to give you an idea of how we live here than a tourist impression of Dublin. Patients who are in labour do not usually feel ready for an exchange of ideas, and most people whom I have been able to meet in the intervals of eating and sleeping have been patients in labour.

We live in a modern hostel, with polished linoleum (one individual seems to devote his whole life to polishing, beginning at the top and working downwards, which occupies exactly the eight hours for which he is employed) adjoining the hospital. Every landing smells of turf and Dettol, which arrives not in bottles but in Rabelaisian churns. This whole building was devised by Rabelais—the quantities of food, particularly stuffed hearts, seem disproportionate when one comes from England: Mooney's bar over the road known as Dispensary No. 3) is a place where one walks under the butt-ends of enormous tuns with taps like water-mains, built into the wall. Outside the streets are full of polygonal-wheeled growlers, which charge four shillings to drive one any distance, however short. Our windows look down on to Arncliffe Street and the main entrance of the hospital, where patients come in,

and where a small queue of people with stout-bottles is always waiting buy four pennyworth of the House Medicine. This is a particularly vicious purge, whose popularity for every type of illness is remarkable—two gallons of it are made daily in an enormous kettle and dispensed by the porter out of Winchester quarts.

Our life is regulated by bells. On every landing and in every corridor there are two electric bells side by side. One makes a noise like a sullen horn and the other like a fire alarm. Whenever one of them rings, everyone ceases talking or eating and counts the peals. Three peals of the buzzer call the 'district', and the two men on duty put down their forks or their playing-cards and go for the extern bag. The buzzer is ringing all day on other missions, calling various members of the staff to and from the labour ward and the theatre, and one can follow the progress of awkward cases as first the Clinic Clerk, then the Assistant Master, then the Master himself are called in quick succession. The other bell has a quality of blowing one off one's chair, making ex-F.A.P. personnel yell 'Action stations!' Whenever it rings, another baby is being born into the world. If it rings twice, the new arrival is making a decent entry head first, and conversation in the common-room begins again. But if it rings once, a peal like a fire-alarm, accompanied by a deafening crackle on the common-room radio, the labour is abnormal. I was going upstairs on the first occasion that this happened. Instantly doors flew open everywhere, and students rushed out. Feet begin pounding up the labour ward stairs. A tall narrow metal lift like a sarcophagus delivers loads of people on to the labour floor. In a few moments we are gowned and watching the Assistant Master bring down a foot.

The labour ward was also devised by Rabelais. It is a big sunny room divided up by curtains hung from wires. All its beds are full. Some patients are groaning and working hard, others are asleep, waiting to be sent to the puerperal ward (you can tell which have been delivered, because the polished metal slop-bath has gone from under the bed). Others are clutching rosaries and calling on saints. Nurses go about saying 'Now bear down. You are working'. The patients look up at students who drift in and out. Next door is the waiting ward, rows of women are rolling tow swabs. Next to that is the baby room, which I found terrifying. The newly born are wrapped in cloths and placed in two-handled mahogany boxes, holding two, which are stacked in rows like racks of shells in a factory. The notice 'No person may pass through this Arch without a Mask' swings slowly from a nail. Some of the newly born are crying, most of them sleeping. A few are moving their hands. Presently a trolley is wheeled in, and a dozen boxes are wheeled out to the wards. Rabelais founded this place, and 'Don Leon' described it:

'Come, *Malthus*, and in Ciceronian Prose  
Tell how a rutting Population grows  
Until the Produce of the Land is spent  
And Brats expire for Lack of Aliment . . .'

The 'district' is liable to call us at any hour of the day or night, and two students set out with a bag. So much of this work is done between two and three in the morning that there is very little I can tell you about it. The mo-

obvious memories in my mind are of blowing up turf fires with an enema syringe, of one or two actual deliveries, of a coloured oleograph of St. Bernadette adoring Our Lady of Lourdes, opposite which I sat for nearly twenty-four hours waiting for a case of inertia to be delivered, the peculiar wet warm surface of newborn infants, born covered in grease like a new rifle, the after-birth putting out the fire, and the voices of children, late on into the night, sleepless children whom one sees at two and three in the morning dancing in the fringe of light from a shaded lamp or pushing little carts to destinations in the darkness. I remember burning round polished logs which are the waste wood from Maguire and Patterson's match-factory, delivering the wife of a long-distance engine driver, and helping a fish-porter to smash up boxes for fuel, scaly boxes under a gigantic ribbed market-roof like the sky.

You will realize that I had time for very little else besides the business in hand. I went into the Lane Gallery, just by our back door, a fine gallery filled with assorted art, and a monument to one of the dirtiest tricks ever played by one gallery on another. I wish I could have seen the paintings its founder wished it to hold—'Les Parapluies', the Ingres, the swashbuckling portrait by Mancini. As it is, the gallery is full of paintings by Lavery. I did not know what I could say of them—Lavery can paint, but my chief reaction was of embarrassment. There are feelings and reactions which are personal, and which a painter must express by painting, but there are also pictures that should not be shown. Works of patriotism, like the picture of Michael Collins dying in state, and works of personal grief, cannot be judged as art. Of the rest of the work in this gallery, there are some queer nebulous groups by Æ, two more Mancinis, an unusual reversal of bad Sickerts and quite good Steers, much good sculpture, and one or two utter monstrosities, including an enormous pale distempery mural by Tuohy, and two or three paintings by Keating which give me the same sense of embarrassment as Lavery's. The best work in the collection is by Jack Yeats—beside this, there is nothing in the modern manner which is not utterly venomous.

I did not see the National Gallery of Ireland—that is where I should have looked first, I suppose. I did not find time to meet very many writers, except Maurice Craig, who is working on a Life of Landor which ought to make his name. Much of the time which I could spare was spent up and down Moore street market watching the slaughterman and the greengrocers, and in and out of the beautiful flimsy Regency houses in Mountjoy Square, which are now turned into tenements. I helped to screw a light-bracket into a magnificent stucco ceiling. The worst of the fuel problem in Dublin is the racket in turf, which is artificially wetted with a hose to make it weigh heavy, and the turning off of the gas supply, except for stated periods in the day. We live by boiling water in obstetrical practice; it appears that the risk of explosion prevents the company from cutting off the main gas completely, so that a small fitful flame remains at all times. In streets near the gasworks this is quite right—it is known as 'the glimmer', and most of the population lives by it. Anyone found making use of the glimmer is in danger of being cut off the gas, and an inspector or sycophant is employed to make rounds, which enable him to enter any room without warning and feel the pots and pans on the stove. I threw him out myself on one occasion—he was a seedy individual

in a peaked cap, who looked like Tartuffe, but perhaps I was unduly angry: the light failed just in articulo partus, and I was assisted only by a trembling old lady who dropped and broke the lamp chimney.

Among my patients' friends, who kept me company during the long and exasperating waits, anyone who realized that I was English thought it their duty to talk about neutrality, and expected me to defend the general line of English broadcasts in their entirety. It is hard to talk to people who have listened to Lord Vansittart in cold blood, with none of the background of suspended intellectual function which war entails. As far as possible I tried to talk with an accent which, if not Irish, was at least paradoxical—I did not want to attack neutrality, which is unassailable when one is in Dublin. Most working people have a sense of historical proportion which comes from living in Irish history, and the present times are too full of parallels—the partisans of Michael Collins, Balbriggan and Lidice, Gandhi and McSwiney—and if the British radio assures these people that Germany has regressed 250 years into barbarism, the public can reply with conviction that it has not regressed twenty-five. I doubt if you can conceive the excitement—quite genuine excitement—that Gandhi's fast produced. I took a week's holiday in Sligo while its outcome was still in doubt, and the men I met on the roads would stop me to ask if I knew how he was today. I don't think they were ragging the Englishman—the usual comment was: 'Makes you think of McSwiney, but he was young and Gandhi's not young at all'. But apart from this, I went back again in a world of home news: the main events were a spectacular murder trial in which the judge constituted himself as an additional prosecutor and a warder was produced in court to testify that accused had been in prison before, a row over the chair of education in U.C.D., organized by the Gaelic League because the new candidate spoke no Irish, and a ghastly fire in which sixty children were burned. They tell me nobody was decorated for starting it. A maid in the hospital told me she had visited New Jersey and would like to have gone back there, 'only the Germans have occupied it now, haven't they?' I had to tell her, with regret, that they have come no nearer than the State Department. Most people are favourably inclined to England, at least when Englishmen are about, though they feel, as with a smallpox patient, that sympathy need not extend as far as catching the disease.

I could not and did not follow Irish politics at all. The language issue was a pretty hollow joke. The letterboxes have still 'BOSCA (BOX)' at the top of the timeplate. A Socialist-Republican Party called Coras na Poblíochta holds meetings in Séan McDermott Street outside a pretty new Italianesque brick church there, and vigorous stump-orators talk about the Beveridge Report from a cart, with a line of little boys dangling legs from the edge of the platform. The main streets have all of them the same absurd rabbit-hut shelters that were built in London at the start of the blitz, with S signs modelled on ours. These are first-rate hoardings for slogan-painters. In a country where one stays for a few weeks at most, slogans are often a valuable guide to minor thought. I made a collection of them, but got little from it. Inside the first railway carriage I entered there were written up on the left 'Up Hitle' (prefixed by 'Blow' in a second hand) and some purely personal graffiti on the right 'B—— de Valera' (handwriting of a small boy) and 'B——



'bloody Jews'. There was also a stencil notice BUY REPUBLICAN BONDS and a sticker 'What Aiseirghe says today, Éire does tomorrow'. Later I saw Aiseirghe's programme. It involves 'the abolition of the foreign system of democracy and the institution of the Gaelic system of leadership and representation of professional and trade bodies': military and labour service for all, with sweeping public work schemes, and liberation of Éire from the influence of 'freemasons and alien elements'. From the pamphlets on all the bookstalls Aiseirghe seems to have plenty of money and support. Meanwhile the Catholic *An t-Iólar* publishes articles on 'Salazar, saviour of his country'. Not all the Churchmen who make speeches have the insight and intelligence of Cardinal McRory. When a big public meeting was called, packed with N.D.'s, to decide how best to combat the growing scourge of phthisis in Dublin, a telegram arrived from a bishop expressing the opinion that it should be entrusted to the Red Cross. Thereupon the meeting drew stumps without more ado, and the phthisis goes on. The Legion of Mary has a hand-cart which sells pamphlets on *The Menace of Godless Russia*.

While I was in Sligo I visited Yeats's future burial place at Drumcliffe. The site of his grave is submerged under a pile of old plaster flowers and the wire frames of wreaths. I do not know if it was prophecy on his part, but next to him lies a twenty-three-year-old Irish airman killed in action last year. The two great cliffs, Benbulbin, a sleeping dog, and Benwhiskin, a petrified wave, stood over all Yeats ever wrote. Sligo town is full of yellow roadblocks and bicycles are worth their weight in gold. Sanctuary oil costs 2s. a pint; one can also buy a fluid called Genuine Grape Brandy. All the Woolworth Stores sell whurlys, and the children use them as weapons from an early age.

Much of this letter is a catalogue of incongruities. It sounds too much like an account of holes in the carpet of a hospitable friend. Perhaps the most striking experience I had was the transition from war to peace in the attitude of the shops. It was a shock to land in Dublin and be civilly spoken to by an assistant in a grocery store. It was even stranger to meet a chemist who refused payment for pills when he discovered I had toothache. Englishmen in Ireland always speak of the hospitality and geniality of the Irish. Coming out of a war, this is an experience rather like a blow. No patients, except one or two who were better off, would let you leave the house without tea or whiskey. The man who made matches filled my pockets with boxes. The man who worked in a doctor's sent cigarettes to the hospital. A friend of mine arrived to visit in Corporation Buildings, a strange barrack of rooms built on slippery steel foundations, and met the christening party—he was plied with food and drink and he could hardly walk home. The poorest people—living in the new 'model flats' at Tigh na Saorse, which they cannot afford to furnish, let alone maintain—would offer the doctor pound packets of tea bought for £1 in the black market. I merely put this on record. It is nothing new, but I trust that Englishmen manage to leave an impression which one is as glad to remember. I don't think I met a person I regretted having met. The wartime state of London makes me unduly sensitive to friendliness.

I came back from Sligo on the last marriage day before Lent, in a carriage full of confetti with a lachrymose parting at every station. Next night, before I went home to England, I paid ninepence to see the first Irish performance

in a hundred years of *Antony and Cleopatra*, at the Gaiety behind Grafton Street. Michéal Mac Liammoir had produced it creditably and without violent introductions. The music was rather more appropriate to a bullfight than Shakespeare—perhaps the Mediterranean flavour was intended to convey Egypt. Apart from the activities of one horn player, I thoroughly enjoyed this show, and I only mention it for a piece of unconscious humour at the end of Act One. No sooner had the curtain fallen than a safety-curtain of a brilliant yellow descended with horrible velocity. On it was painted

ODEAREST SANITIZED INNERSPRING MATTRESS

Actively Antiseptic

Self Sterilizing

Permanently Germproof

For ten minutes we inspected this without a murmur. At the end of Act One it reappeared. It finally concealed Cleopatra from us when the band played 'God Save Ireland'.

Next day I went home.

I saw a few copies of *HORIZON* in Éire. The most widely read English paper is the tabloid *News Review*. The Beveridge Report was out on all the bookstalls.

I trust this finds you well. I have gained ten pounds weight since I went overseas.

Mise, le méas,

ALEX COMFORT

MICHAEL ROTHENSTEIN

'CAN WE BE  
EDUCATED UP TO ART?

NOTES ON LECTURING TO THE ARMY

# I

I SCRAMBLED on to a high platform, a sort of stage at one end of a large drill hall, and peered down through the gloom at the audience of a hundred men. It was permanently blacked-out, and the half-dozen unshaded electric bulbs which hung from the ceiling worried one's sight but left most of the hall in darkness. It was heavy going in this cold anonymous atmosphere speaking with any warmth to an audience whose attendance

was compulsory. Half-dark and unheated, it had the bleak inhuman feel such places nearly always have. Every time I shifted my weight the boards of the stage creaked hollowly.

This was a first impression of lecturing for the Army Education Scheme. It wasn't, as it turned out, specially typical of the conditions; many of the rooms used, army huts and club-rooms, etc., are excellent places to give talks in. Drill-halls are only used for the larger audiences. An E.N.S.A. concert party had been given in the blackest of these drill-halls; a few red, white, and blue paper decorations remained hanging from the ceiling, and there were pieces of acid-green tissue paper wrapped round the few illuminated bulbs. This added immensely to the gloom; it was like talking to rows and rows of men sitting inside a big black coffin, with a few paper-decorations hanging inside the lid instead of a few flowers put on top of it. Yet, oddly enough, we always had tremendously full-blooded discussion. A few times I lectured there, partly because officers were never present and partly because everyone seemed determined not to let the really aggressive gloom get him down; if it had once got you down, you felt there would be no getting up again. It was a place for mass suicide.

Where the talks are given is always a big factor. Permanently blacked-out drill halls are as a rule the worst places possible. The best are those with some definite connection with the life and interests of the unit.

When the men are interested, the vigour and spontaneity of their interest is refreshing. They don't expect to be interested—and here one hopes they differ from most other audiences—but when they are they show undisguised appreciation. I have already suggested, it is easier to get contact with the men when officers are not present; however much they are liked personally they create an atmosphere of greater formality and restraint. Exceptions are extremely rare.

## II

Talking about painting to the army makes you realize with new force how big the gap is which separates your own work from anything which seems important in ordinary life. It gives you an almost physical sense of isolation, as though your audience were

sitting out of earshot and you were forced to shout to make yourself intelligible.

This is the outstanding problem and it always confronts you. It is hard to discover in the men themselves any common basis for discussion and gives the measure of the distance which separates art, even in its simplest forms, from the life of the community. In throwing out the craftsman the Industrial Revolution created a barrier of machines between the artist and the people and destroyed the foundation upon which the magnificent pyramid of creative endeavour had rested. Until society achieves a sensitive adaptation of the machine to its creative ends, using it as it once used the craftsman's hands, the artist will continue up the crooked footpaths of extreme individualism, alone.

In attempting to reach the troops, any sort of orthodox and lecturing is useless—it takes too much for granted. The great majority of the men are naturally more than indifferent to any ideas about art. They think in concrete terms; their immediate physical condition, the comforts and discomforts of army life are naturally among their main concerns: if you are to make any headway you must be correspondingly concrete.

I felt, therefore, that demonstration with the actual tools of the artist's trade and factual descriptions of his working conditions today presented the firmest starting point. After all most people have used tools at some time in their lives—and like the artist they have to earn their living. Whenever possible I brought working materials to the lectures, and painted two or three forms in gouache on large sheets of paper—explaining anything I felt to be explainable as I went along. The few times I was able to use this method—special facilities were needed—it had a tonic effect on the audience. The general reaction was one of surprise. 'We never knew artists worked like that,' expressed this feeling. Several men thought it gave them 'much more understanding of modern art'. Others that 'it was quite different from the way they were taught to use water-colour at school', but wanted to know more of what they felt to be modern methods.

Among audiences of about a hundred men there were always three or four who 'sketched a bit themselves', or did caricatures. These were invariably clever imitations of film magazine drawings. The comic sketches I saw were equally lacking in originality.



### III

Response to examples of modern painting—no lanterns were available, one has to depend on lithographs and large photographic prints—is, as would be expected, extremely negative. The men like Kennington's portraits and don't like Moore's tube shelters. They always prefer the worst examples shown, the highly finished elaborately representational picture. The majority make very little distinction between painting and photography. In painting the camera is merely replaced by the hand. Sentiment is important because it helps you to give a pleasing view of your subject and thus compensates to some extent for a less faithful rendering; also the colour of an oil painting is felt to be more realistic than the colour of a coloured photograph. If a man has done any painting himself he has great respect for the superior skill of the professional. Here is an instance of this feeling: 'I used to 'ave postcards by Raphael (Raphael Tuck's postcards were meant), landscapes—they were lovely—the colours and the distance and the 'aze over it—it's lovely. An artist goes right inside his picture when it's like that, don't he?' Paintings which are felt to be unrealistic are never spontaneously approved of. 'There's Nature and you can't add nothing to it and you can't take nothing away,' as one man put it. If a picture is all brushstrokes close to but gives an effect of realism ten feet away it is considered 'wonderful'. 'I went up close and I couldn't see anything, but when I got back I could see a house with people looking out of all the windows—it was wonderful.'

Obvious symbolism has a marked appeal. Paul Nash's smashed Nazi bomber, with white cliffs towering in the background, was much liked.

For a large number of the men the main difficulty seems to be to see any point at all in people painting when the camera can do it in half the time'. Several men asked 'why do they have War Artists when they could just take photographs?' They see the point of making records but they don't see the point of making comments on experience. The basic feeling is that pictures don't *do* anything, that they're no use.

The questions asked during discussion are serious, but very rarely interesting. To the troops, Epstein is the most familiar name among living artists; and Surrealism is the only school about which some of them have heard. 'What do you think of

Surrealism?' is a fairly common question. On one occasion, in discussion of the difficulties of the War Artist's job, an intense-looking fellow in the back row who had been sitting huddled up with his head in hands, suddenly cleared his throat, looked up at the ceiling and asked, 'do you think that the trouble with the War Artists nowadays is that they miss the red coats?' Very few questions showed this freshness of outlook.

At a number of talks I gave some account of an artist's training, of the conditions under which he works, and of his relations with dealers and patrons. This does something to counter the commonly held sugar-icing-for-the-rich attitude to art and helps people to realize that a painter's life is mostly hard work and poor pay. The feeling that art can never touch the lives of the people is very strong indeed. It makes one realize how little visited museums and galleries must be. A wet Sunday afternoon will induce a few couples to find shelter in the local museum; but these dark mausoleums of bones and pottery chips are usually deserted. The imaginative wartime policy of the National Gallery should be noticed in this connection.

#### IV

In discussing applied art, army audiences have the usual misconception of the relation between function and design. Design is confounded with ornament and function is thought of separately. They argue that you make a chair first, or a house or a bookshelf, and afterwards you make it look 'all right', that is, stick on some ornament. Decoration is just a frill, it doesn't do anything. Ornateness and high cost are often associated with gentility in the minds of the older men. Only when it comes to machinery does unity of outlook exist; here there is genuine perception of the identity of form and function. After all the relationship is much more obvious in machines, and there is generally no question of ornament.

I took actual objects to talks on applied art, good and bad examples of crockery for instance, and tried to explain the practical and æsthetic differences which separate a well-designed easily cleaned teapot sold at one-and-tenpence from a much more expensive 'naice' teapot which is easy to knock over, difficult to wash up and has a spout that drips. The trouble here is that ha

your audience have teapots and tea sets of just this kind, shut up in glass-fronted corner cupboards in best front rooms, and that these ornate, unused tea services have a tremendous respectability value in the eyes of their owners. You are up against one of the insidious minor evils of our present way of life; the emulation of out-of-date upper class habits by the lower-middle and working-class, and the lower-middle and working-class having to do it on the cheap.

Living as we do surrounded by examples of design and workmanship whose quality ranges from the inoffensive to the odious, we can hardly wonder that the average man—with his instinct for imitation—should furnish and arrange his house without the faintest touch of character and originality. In every field machine-production methods have produced a weight of bad example which has crushed and encumbered the inherent faculty of selection. Admittedly this faculty is fallible. Only certain periods have found general expression in really noble form-types but never before can bad taste have been so prevalent.

The men are generally very interested in house design; rather resentfully so, as they realize that their place of residence is dictated by their wage and the situation of their work, and they feel they can exercise little choice in the matter. It is the same with furniture. Many of them, particularly those who have done some carpentering themselves, are quite aware of the shoddiness of the Tottenham Court Road 'suites' which flooded the pre-war market, but knowing the expense of tables and chairs of decent workmanship, they feel, once again, that they have no choice to make. Those who have had any definite wishes for better built houses and better made furniture have learnt to discount them; where this has not been done a residue of bitterness remains and as tang is often recognizable during discussion. The bred-in-the-bone acceptance of their own inability to influence their surroundings makes it hard for the men to imagine that in a better planned community any of this could be changed. The more intelligent men enter with vigour into the discussion of planning possibilities, but at the back of their minds you know they are thinking, 'it's all right talking about better planned production, well designed tables and chairs at anybody's price, but is discussion going to bring it any nearer as far as we're concerned?'

A small minority, as would be expected, have a more dynamic

view-point. They are aware of change and see its roots in organization and machines. This quality of awareness was sometimes shown in quite simple questions. 'Do you think they'll extend the idea of utility furniture?' was a typical one.

## V

A poorly educated man will often have strong inferiority feelings in talking to anyone he believes to be better educated than himself. 'A good education puts a man up,' as one soldier put it, 'but I say, the man who is up—at the top of the tree—should come down; down out of the boughs and walk with the ordinary man.' It is essential to meet the men on the level of their own state of knowledge and you must do this without any suggestion of talking down. This imposes a heavy strain upon a serious speaker. Talking over their heads, which is always easier, raises the question, 'can we be educated up to Art?' This is a disheartening question; you think of the noble sculpture of the negro and of the thirteenth-century carving round the font in the village church and you wonder hopelessly how much can be taught when a certain relationship between nature and imagination is missing. In talking to the army you are easily led to depressing conclusions: you have to remember that your audience is there under compulsion and that you are dealing with men who have missed many educational advantages which their children enjoy. In the long run education may do much and a beginning has been made. Teachers are at last realizing that children possess great imaginative gifts which, in a number of schools, they are no longer discouraged from using.

With adults the situation is different. The exercise of taste and appreciation is, I suggest, essentially an active process, a secondary and less dynamic phase, of the creative instinct. But when the average person goes to a picture exhibition he feels bewildered; he will tell you that he 'didn't know *where* to begin looking at the pictures', and finds no means within himself of regaining touch with his dormant creative instincts. Many excellent picture exhibitions are travelling round the provinces. They are doing valuable work in bringing pictures within reach of a wide public. This exhibition programme, particularly in its early stages of expansion, might perhaps be augmented by a new type of exhibition designed to give direct insight into painting technique.



Mr. Tubbs's excellent architectural exhibitions might be the model here. The painter's method of work should be illustrated by a series of exhibits, together with integrating captions, culminating in examples of finished pictures, and including the work of some good Sunday painters. Such an exhibition, in making certain facts about painting clear and understandable, would do much for amateur artists in the army and would help much wider public to form more constructive judgments of painting.

## SELECTED NOTICES

*God and Evil.* By C. E. M. Joad. (Faber. 8s. 6d.)

*Man the Master.* By Gerald Heard. (Faber. 22s. 6d.)

DURING times of distress and war, it is natural that people should re-examine the values on which their lives are based, and seek for better ones. The values of the modern world in which we live have failed to prevent two world wars happening within twenty years. The political solutions of political problems involve us in fighting the war and in, perhaps, being prepared to support revolutions in which there will be more mass murder. Therefore many people today, whether or not they accept violence as necessary, try to look outside the political process in which we are involved, to some system of values on which to found a less chaotic world.

In general there is today an awakening of 'spiritual awareness'. This is a vague term for a pretty vague awakening. One of the symptoms of awakening which I myself do *not* find, is a general return to past values, in particular to Christian ones. There are signs of this amongst the intelligentsia, but not among more ordinary people. Why?

People look back on the past and recognize that it was more well ordered than the present, though there were certainly wars and much misery. They attribute the comparative peace of the past, however, not so much to 'Christian values', as to lack of modern scientific inventions for killing, and, perhaps so, to a state of mind which was in some respects less ruthlessly commercial and materialist. For most people, a return to the past stands for something negative (lack of tanks and aeroplanes) rather than for something positive (churches and Christian values). It is only a small section of the intelligentsia who are seriously concerned with 'traditional values'. If these values are of importance to us in the future, the responsibility, then, of the few people who are so concerned is considerable.

There might be a religious revival, if many people were conscious of the following situation: that they had forsaken the one and true God for false gods and that instead of worshipping in Church they worshipped a golden calf. They are perhaps a little penitent about the golden calf (though they suspect their neighbours of being more devout and successful worshippers

than they themselves); but they are not conscious of having betrayed God. On the contrary, they suspect the good faith of those who believe in God, and they probably regard their own leanings towards belief as a form of weakness. Why, again? Not because they believe in 'the values of science' as opposed to 'Christian values', but because they do not believe that they can attain knowledge of any part of reality whose existence cannot be proved by science. They do not, probably, believe that God has been disproved, but neither do they believe that His existence has been proved, by science. The scientist today is in the position of the doctor in the Temple who knows as much as is to be known of the ultimate nature of existence. To the ordinary man or woman, it is not enough for the doctor to say now that he cannot prove that God doesn't exist. He must definitely provide God with a Life Certificate, if there is to be a popular religious revival. A weighing up of the pros and cons, with a slight tendency to accept the pros for subjective reasons of the kind that Joad provides in his new book, is not enough.

Intellectuals often feel a need for discipline in their lives, because they find that they are incapable of dealing with their own freedom. The autobiographical part of *God and Evil* is interesting in this respect: without a belief in God, Joad found himself incapable of discovering reasons for restraining his appetites, and singularly lacking in a sense of guilt. This seems to me a little unusual, because I find that one's relationship with other people provides one with very good reasons for behaving considerably and even virtuously, and the feeling that I have betrayed the trust that others put in me gives me many pangs of conscience a day. I mention this, because it seems to me sensible, and because I can scarcely understand anyone not feeling it. One lack of virtue is a strain on those who love one, and it adds, even if very slightly, to the difficulties of all one's contemporaries.

Poor people do not feel the same need of discipline as the intellectuals, because they are pretty well disciplined from an early hour in the morning until late at night by their environment. If they are unemployed and therefore in a sense 'free', they blame the social system, and established religion gets some of that blame.

The majority of people, in their humble ignorance, demand, as people have always done in the past, a basis of literal truth, guaranteed by the learned men of their time, before they accept metaphysical mythologies on which to build their values.

It is only for intellectual people that the myth, and the values and order based merely on the myth, are all-important. People who say that they are Christians because they accept the 'Christian myth', or because they think that, as one recent writer puts it, 'all other things being equal, a Christian writer should write better poetry than a non-Christian'; these are 'highbrows' in a sense which certainly distinguishes them from the majority. For them Christianity is true because it enables them to order their lives, because it gives them an insight into their fellow beings which they lack from experience and an understanding of human history far greater than is provided by political theory, or by scientific doubt. They require a hypothesis. The meaning of the fable is more important to them than the question whether it is literally true.

There is, however, a difference between religious and other fables. Religious teachers demand (to a varying extent certainly) that one should believe their fables not only metaphorically but also literally. To some minds this does not seem to offer any difficulty. If Christian values appear to them higher than those of 'Communists, the B.B.C. and Mass-Observers' (to paraphrase another recent writer), then they believe in all that Christians are expected to believe. To other minds, this presents an insuperable difficulty. If *Macbeth* were Holy Scripture instead of a fable of great moral truth written by a poet of genius, then we would be expected to believe literally in the witches, the ghosts, and Banquo's ghost. Moreover, scholars and critics, instead of trying to explain and correct the text from a literary viewpoint, would do so from the point of credibility. This attempt to reconcile moral truth with literal fact would of course consider the poetry of the play as less valuable than its claims to be historically true. At the same time, *Macbeth* would have an added significance for millions of people, because they would believe that it was an account of something which had really happened.

It seems to me that the moral truth of religion provides those values which we must distil from the past and inject into the creed of the future on which we base our institutions. The trouble is, though, that the necessity of doing this is not apparent to people unless they believe the myth to be literally as well as poetically true. Intellectuals tend to ignore this important fact. C. E. M. Joad, in devoting so much of his book to discussing the question of the existence of God, therefore performs a real service. Yet these arguments tell us more about the existence of Joad than of God. Joad first of all deals with the reasons for and against the existence of God; the result of this argument is really inconclusive, but he at least succeeds in demonstrating that God has not been disproved by science, so he is therefore free to choose to believe in Him. Having chosen to believe, he then chooses what sort of God to believe in. He arrives, for example, at the conclusion that he is 'unable to believe that God is a person' in the sense of the word that much Christian doctrine entails. He is unable to believe this, not because of his knowledge of God, of which he has none, but because of his knowledge of the way in which his own mind has been conditioned by science, by anthropology, and by the reasoning faculty being 'too much on the alert'.

It may be objected to Joad's arguments that for him to believe in God at all is such a jump outside the province of science and logic that he is hardly in a position to apply his reasoning faculty to the definition of God. What he does is arbitrarily to accept the idea of God and then to apply the limitations of his own reasoning to this proposition. The theological critics who have discussed his book say, with sensible confidence, 'having gone so far, we expect Dr. Joad to go much further'.

Sometimes Dr. Joad's logic leads him into absurd situations. The passage in which he protests against Christ's 'anti-intellectual bias' is an example. Obviously he has not the slightest idea what Christ meant by telling people to 'become as little children'. He definitely did *not* mean 'Only the boys in the first form get into the Kingdom of Heaven. No professors admitted.' A variation on this Christian theme is contained in Wordsworth's *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*.

Experience of beauty, appreciation of art, recognition of virtue in other people, seem to Dr. Joad to be forms of religious experience. At the end of the book there is a passage in which he describes the beauty of Lincoln Cathedral, and the sense of majesty which it arouses in him. 'For what was the faith felt? By what were the emotions aroused?' he asks. The answer seems to be either by the sense of a reality which is God, or by nothing at all.

Surely there is another answer to these questions. The æsthetic sense can be aroused without its proving either that there is a God, or alternatively, that 'there is nothing worshipful, nothing worthy of our reverence and awe' in a universe which 'contains nothing of the sacred or of the sublime'. It occurs to me that there are several incontrovertible truths about life which are always worthy of reverence and awe, without their having to prove anything. I think that Joad is wrong if he thinks that the æsthetic sense is a form of the religious sense. A point about the æsthetic sense is often, surely, that it simply asserts existence.

The following facts about existence are impressive enough to fill the minds of non-Church goers, I feel:

(1) The situation of humanity in relation to the universe. This involves us in considering the relationship between life limited in time, of human beings who cannot think of existence except in terms of having an end and a beginning, to the universe of which it is equally impossible to conceive either the beginning or the end.

In other words, existence itself, quite apart from life, is a supreme mystery, because it is impossible for us to imagine non-existence, and yet we are constantly measuring our own lives against this timeless universe.

(2) Human life, and the deep involvedness of the lives of human beings one with another, and with the past; the crucial need of humanity for love, and the great misunderstandings caused by the breaking up of life into separate personalities and separate consciousnesses.

It seems to me that to indicate the above facts is sufficient to account for the sense of awe. These facts of existence are known to everyone and they are the instruments on which artists play, undoubtedly. They are also the realities on which all religions are based. Amongst other things, God is the name for an existence whose beginning and end are equally impossible to imagine.

The religious sense derives from our sense of our position in the universe, and the moral sense from our need of love. The Church has far more truths to say about all this than any individual can possibly say. That is why, in a way, Joad's preoccupation with the question of God's existence, and his lack of understanding of the teaching of the Church, makes his book a little superficial. All the same, it bothers me that the hypothetical mythology and imagery set up by religious thinkers in order to explain man's position in the universe has to be taken literally, and that one is expected to know the truth about things of which it is obviously impossible to know the final answer.

Joad is very worried about evil. As many people today do not even believe in the existence of evil, this is interesting. He tends to identify evil with pain. Pain is certainly sometimes evil (when it inhibits moral growth), but was Beethoven's deafness evil?

When we leave Joad for Gerald Heard, we begin to feel a respect for the



dogmatic side of religions. Religion deals with such fundamental mysteries and makes such daring assertions that it is a danger in the hands of enthusiastic individuals. Such individuals are liable to become heretics, and although they may discover particular truths, once they break away from the central doctrine of traditional teaching, they certainly fall short of it in many respects, and the more they consider themselves divinely inspired, the more dangerous they become.

Gerald Heard has an extremely heretical mind. He is essentially religious, and he is completely devout. His convictions are so deep, and his crusading zeal so fervent that there are no historic or scientific facts that he will not twist to illustrate his preachings. The world of phenomena and of knowledge exist for him simply as a paintbox of colours to be arranged at will to paint his Message with the most dazzling possible brightness. A typical Gerald Heard argument is the following: he wants to prove that the Dictators will fail. At the same time he is a pacifist, so he has to ignore the various armies, navies and air forces which are at present helping them to do so. He therefore says that the Dictators will fail because, in order to increase their own efficiency, they have to have great numbers of technical experts: now these experts in acquiring technical knowledge will also be in a position to judge the phoney political creeds of the Dictators. So the Dictators will be hoist with the petard of their own technical advisers.

However, if allowance is made for the many careless and exaggerated statements in this book, and occasional flights of fantasy (e.g. 'There is a real danger that the consistent pacifist . . . will be summoned and requested to help save the State'), there are interesting and important ideas. Gerald Heard sees one thing clearly which politicians and most other people fail to see. That the world has reached a stage when it is not enough merely to introduce social improvements, and changes on the political scene, but when man himself has got to take a great step forward in consciousness. Heard's theory is that this will happen through the emergence (already taking place) of a type of man willing to submit himself to a discipline which will make him a 'seer'. The point of this discipline is that he will become detached from the aims of wealth and power, and he will be in touch with the subconscious.

The idea of a new priesthood of men who are willing to concern themselves with government, but who are not caught up in interests of power and wealth, is suggestive. The trouble with Heard, in his books at any rate, is his vagueness. Although he talks about 'an emergent type' he does not give a single living example of such a person. Reading the book, one has the impression that an esoteric type of pacifist is growing up in America who is compensating for sense of his own inferiority caused by being outside the war by developing a cult of his own world-importance.

The work of several recent artists illustrates much of Heard's thesis. The chief symptoms of this kind of art are: (1) An anticipation of the complete breakdown and disorder of existing social systems. The surrealists have certainly expressed this. (2) The search for a non-personal, non-individual human type which yet is expressive of human suffering, aspiration and love. This type of art goes much deeper than surrealism, which exists really on the level of sensational headlines in the press. These inhuman-human faces of a

passionate, suffering, unconscious humanity 'waiting to be born' are present in the recent work of Picasso, and in the drawings of Henry Moore.

However, artists are not political leaders, and Heard is right in thinking that politics need some kind of leadership by men who are not merely in touch with political parties and economic arrangements, but also with the subconscious needs of humanity. The politician-who-does-not-think-only-in-political-terms is needed (I do not mean the National Government candidate who Stands above Party). Heard is probably right in thinking that such a non-political politician would also require a special kind of self-discipline, since his function must really be selfless in a way in which men have forgotten to be for several generations.

Unfortunately, though, Heard himself does not seem to have discovered any such discipline. If he had, I feel that his mind would work more clearly than it does either in *Man the Master* or the interesting little interpretation of Christ called *A Dialogue in the Desert*. His proposal for an immense caste system of seers, technicians and artists, and workers, is peculiarly horrible to me. In this new world, the seers are completely ascetic, the workers work and have sexual intercourse. It seems to me that a little manual labour and sexual intercourse amongst the seers might bring them to their senses. At the end of *A Dialogue in the Desert* the Christ-Heard hero says: 'I know that my mission is not to a sect of eremites but to ordinary mankind.' One of the lessons of the modern world surely is that if one's mission is to ordinary mankind, one can only have one of two things to say to them—'learn to be free', or 'learn to be a slave'. The sanity of the world rests ultimately on our being able to achieve the freedom of the majority without all past values being destroyed in the process.

STEPHEN SPENDER

## LA BONNE CHÈRE EN ANGLETERRE

'A CONCISE ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF GASTRONOMY'<sup>1</sup> was a brave and timely undertaking on the part of the Wine and Food Society. Qualifications will follow, but it is just to call the achievement brave too from an estimate of the first five volumes now on sale; and to applaud without hesitation the typographical performance of the Curwen Press.

Doubtless some original announcement proposed the scope of the Encyclopædia; but no existing sub-title explains the whole work, and perhaps its why and how are best indicated by an oblique statement: of the public it will reach. At one end is the Silver Ladle pier-party. Readers of current cooking literature will know what is meant: there is apt to be blue blooded roguishness and whimsical pictures. 'Lady Ada Randem's cook told me, when she was plunging a poor live lobster into boiling water (such low forms of life feel *nothing*, but it does seem dreadful), how she makes her superb *potage*'

<sup>1</sup> Compiled under the editorial direction of André L. Simon. Published by the Wine and Food Society. Section I: 3s. 6d. net. Sections II and III: each 6s. net. Sections IV and V: each 7s. 6d. net.

*bleu.* The recipe follows, modestly omitting the stock or the garnish, as Lady Ada's cook intended. A rolling pin is too good to baste them with, these idiots in the kitchen, but, since their nonsense infects two thirds of the cookery books published, they cannot be forgotten. In this gallery the *Encyclopædia* will cause excited croodlings, especially when Monsieur Simon's contributors are abstruse, florid or resourcefully off the point.

The book deserves better, and will fascinate, with its diversity of information and many excellent recipes, scores of people who find food an agreeable and a serious matter; who, if they cook themselves, are happy to experiment, without blaming all their failures on the textbook. For them the purchase of this work will short-circuit the acquisition of an indefinite number of sketchy manuals.

There remain the experts, those who are professionals not necessarily because they are paid, but because they are trained, to cook; having burnt, spilled, spoiled, sweated and otherwise diligently graduated to mastery of their art. These the Wine and Food Society has not much to teach. Old-time formulæ for a plumb cake or a tansy will warm their imagination about as fast as the ice-box. Having to prepare an unfamiliar object, they are quite likely to find directions here; but there is no guarantee with a work labelled concise. In general they will probably sniff a lack of authority.

No cookery book was ever written without plagiarism; to borrow, with or without permission, from the experience of others is part of the alphabet. In our journalists' Babel you are licensed to sit down and write a cookery best seller with no more equipment than scissors and a row of cook books. The brand-new thesaurus thus generated is haply fragrant with its author's personality, but often shows less acquaintance with culinary science than the fellow possesses. Not a few books of this kind have been consulted for the *Encyclopædia*. Very precious few standard works are even alluded to—Escoffier's '*Ma Cuisine*', Mrs. Beeton, and Fannie Farmer's '*Boston Cook Book*' alone, or practically alone, have the distinction of being cited. Whilst America is almost better represented than courtesy could ask, France shrinks from view, obscured by that cloud beneath which famous restaurateurs reflect the Germans in Paris. Perhaps it is some mistaken modesty on the part of Monsieur Simon—a modesty which replaces *Mont Blanc* with *Monte Bianco*. French bourgeois cooking is mentioned at a remove, with never a nod to Tante Marie, Ma Grand'mère or our more formal acquaintances, Madame Saint-Ange and Les Cuisiniers de Paris. Less excusably, Ali Bab is considered beyond the pale. Though the *haute cuisine* earns respectful mention, is there a hint that one might respect equally a Boulevard Saint-Germain peopled with dotards? Italy, Spain, Scandinavia, the Jews, all receive less than their due. And foreign recipes (except Escoffier's), instead of being translated from the original, are generally in Miss So-and-So's adaptation.

In fairness one should say that Sections I and IV are the real offenders; but it is only FISH who is content with the best authorities (who alone invoke that ablest of living English writers, Mrs. Elizabeth Lucas).

Section I, SAUCES, lists also a number of herbs, spices, seasonings and garnishes. An entry facing the Foreword invites quotation rather than comment:—

All the sauces not otherwise authenticated are VIVETTE recipes. VIVETTE is the nom de plume of a gifted lady, French by birth, but English by marriage who was for a number of years household manager to Edsel Ford (son of Henry Ford), of Detroit. Her practical and thorough knowledge of French, English and American kitchens and cooking fitted her admirably for co-operation in the present work. VIVETTE now lives in the South of France, but she visits England every year, and her name and address will be given to any member who wishes to gain the benefit of her advice upon culinary matters.

Could Vivette have composed the entry *Béchamel*? From which it would appear that the *aromates* may be what you will, and that the addition of 'mushroom, chopped parsley, chopped hard-boiled eggs, oysters or whatnot' would not compromise the sauce's identity. Vivette cannot have been party to certain other curiosities: *blanquette* without the egg liaison, and curry without turmeric, a *maître d'hôtel* butter containing chives and *finest herbes* that feature shallots but no tarragon. Escoffier has expressed himself quite strongly of the opinion that 'Cold is rather deleterious to the mayonnaise', but SAUCES holds the opposite. *Serpentaria* is not the Italian for tarragon (*targone* or *dragoncello*); *finocchio* is not *fœniculum vulgare*; *alium*, *sinapis*, *bassilico* are solecisms more excusable in a work of reference than *ail*, *demi-glacé*, *pomme nœisette*, none of which need be blamed on the printer. What dulse, in all civility, is pepper dulse?

It is soothing to pass on to Section II, FISH: a learned, skilful, thorough piece of work. Look up Crab, Sole, Herring, Oysters, and almost certainly you will find your problem cleared up. If you would rather, examine Grunt, Grouper, Skelly, Cunner or Topsi-mutchi. The introductory essay says just what was needed about choosing, cleaning, cooking and curing fish, though perhaps more kudos might have been attached to the paper bag. French methods of preparation happily suffer from no neglect, and with the worst will in the world it would be hard to pick sizable holes in FISH. Another edition might perhaps mention cephalopods, also the distracting green bone of the garfish, and the fact that ormers need tunding like a steak. It is to our taste ungenerous to dismiss the grey mullet as merely coarser than the red, fresh-caught and fried whiting as flavourless, and the 'witch sole' as pretty unmentionable (this is one of the few foggy definitions.)

Sections III and V deal respectively with VEGETABLES and FRUIT in a comprehensive and efficient manner. Great pains have been taken to cover the rare and remote, but it is to the compiler's credit that some of the best and fullest entries describe common creatures—the broad bean, carrot, parsnip, the apple, orange, banana. Nostalgia has hindered justice to the lemon; and wild rice has eluded capture by Latin or English index, doubtless from apathy in the pursuers. Fungi, with the exception of *agaricus campestris*, are rather hastily marshalled. It is absurd to speak of the beefsteak mushroom which grows in slabs on a tree; nor do we like the term for *cèpes*, morels, chanterelles the giant puff-ball or *amanita rubescens*. With tomatoes in VEGETABLES melons would have looked more at home in FRUIT. Herbs are here dealt with more intelligently than in Section I, from which they should be expelled. But these minor troubles were inevitable. We read with relief that carrots are not an ingredient for puddings, and cauliflowers are not to be boiled; wit-



joy of cold leeks, cold Jerusalem artichokes, and vodka after Cantaloup; with a flush of hope of the underprized celeriac (surely best of all raw), scorzonera, laver, boletus and that 'least flatulent bean', the soy; with reserved judgement of salads containing shoots which are devious, be they never so young—rest-harrow, angelica, black bryony and stonecrop.

The display of fruits in Section V is exotic enough even for the Editor of HORIZON. If in your case *igba purú* and *achojcha* don't mean a thing, nor yet *goumi*, *wampi* and the *mammee* apple, your homely fancy may still banquet on medlar jelly, *soufflé de marrons*, and blackcurrant gin. (Liquor is promised in Section VII.) Meanwhile, the reader may be grateful for a recipe for *Café Brûlot*, a tippie that finds its way into exceedingly few cookery books and which the Wine and Food Society owes to Merle Armitage's *Book of Food: Fit for a King* (Longmans, Green & Co., N.Y.C. 1939), and Mr. Armitage to Mr. Byrne, Beverly Hills (who did not invent it).

### COFFEE ROYALE

(The Californian edition of the New Orleans *Café Brûlot*.—ED.)

½ part Rum Martinique

½ part Cognac

1 clove

1 piece cinnamon stick about three times length of clove

½ strip orange peel

½ strip lemon peel

1 lump of sugar

Have coffee ready and piping hot. Put dry ingredients, cinnamon, clove, sugar, peels in hot pyrex bowl placed in boiling water (avoid all metal). Pour in liquor. Take one lump of sugar, cover with liquor and start as wick for burning.

Using common rum, 1 part, and no brandy, and perhaps a dash of limejuice in place of the peel, you could get in this day, age and island, quite a tolerable and inflammable substitute.

There remains Section IV, CEREALS, which has the same fiddlesome approach as Section I. The category tends to make trouble. Many sweets and custards are not made with flour, and *Maccheroni* is forced to sit down between *Macaroons* and *Love-and-Tangle*. In a kermesse of American cakes and cookies (including three versions of *Angel Cake*), *Devil's Food* and *Apple Sauce Cake* have been elbowed out. So has *Honey Cake* (we except the recipe of 1805 postulating pearl ash), *plava*, most French *pâtisserie*, queen cakes, cream buns and for all I know your six favourite puddings.

Mr. George Augustus Sala's recommendations (1895) do not disclose the secret of puff pastry—he never mentions aeration. For ourselves, we care less and less how it was made in '54, '43 and 1783. Incidentally, puff pastry is not what *éclairs* are made of; nor *beignets*; nor *croissants*. And a halfpennyworth of affron today would make a fair-sized cake for a doll.

Professor Drummond's article on Bread deserves careful reading. Does the Ministry of Food endorse his assurance that the National Flour is rapidly approaching the same character as 'Canada approved' (a whole-grain flour)? What proportion of vitamins is in the aleurone layer?

The discovery of the vital importance of vitamins, during the past twenty-five years, should have made the inclusion of the germ of the grain in the people's bread a moral as well as a legal obligation for the millers. But nothing of the sort happened. The separation of the germ was made even more complete in order to provide raw materials for valuable cattle food and for a variety of 'health products' to be sold to the public as proprietary articles.

Will Lord Woolton and Mr. R. S. Hudson answer in words of one syllable if we put one more question: Is the germ of the wheat no longer raped from the people's bread for 'valuable cattle foods', invalid preparations, and fancy breads?

The four unpublished sections are BIRDS AND THEIR EGGS, MEAT, WINES AND SPIRITS, and a SUPPLEMENT AND INDEX. BIRDS and MEAT will swell the number of soups, and, we trust, give in full the classical regulations for the *fonds de cuisine*. Lest Section VI should turn vinous but cold eyes on the cocktail, let us plead for a few reputable specimens (we all drink them, anyway); and let them be prescribed by 'Harry' and by no means from a cookery book. Section IX could conveniently include in the addenda some general notes on *hors d'œuvre*, sweetmaking, icings, on Carême, Soyer and other giants; and a list of *tisanes*, whose right is the store-cupboard as well as the medicine chest apparently needs defence. (You will con the published index in vain for *anis*, *tilleul*, *verveine* or even peppermint tea.) As for the General Index, it would be hard to exaggerate its importance, or the bother it will be to compile. A proper preliminary would be the recension, purging and amplifying of Sections I and IV; and ideally it would be multilingual and an improvement on the one or two existing glossaries.

Exactly what is meant by Monsieur Simon's 'editorial direction' does not become evident in the volumes before us, but the impression grows that Monsieur Simon is not responsible enough for his contributors, and that no single policy has persisted. His duties have been complicated by serial publication: the warring claims of present and future. If on the one hand each separate part is a unit, the part is ten times more useful, and it attracts a purchaser who would never contemplate A—D. But there are endless troubles of cross-reference and duplication. If, on the other hand, like *Larousse Gastronomique*, you concentrate on the final binding up, T—Z has to be clearly assembled, at least in the editorial mind, before you can make a start. In a country more attentive to laxatives than good food, to vitamins than appetite it is pardonable that the Encyclopædia should have plumped for commercial expediency; though the alternative course might have led to a more scientific work of reference. For what we have got let us be grateful to the Wine and Food Council, and let them preserve our gratitude like sober policemen. Let Hannah Glasse, and a Rare Lark Pudding, spell a caution; and levy the lock-up

COLIN SUMMERFORD

*The Heritage of Symbolism.* By C. M. Bowra. (Macmillan. 15s.)

THIS book is that rare event, criticism which, without being solemn or pompous, deals seriously with poetry. It is evident that poetry is to Dr. Bowra a way of interpreting truth as accurate as science, and of approaching experience as analytic as psychology. He regards poetry as an experience of truth, and his task as a critic is chiefly, I think, to measure, analyse and weigh each poet's contribution to the kind of knowledge derived from poetry. In this book, the general nature of that knowledge comes roughly under the heading of Post-Symbolism. The symbolists had an attitude to poetry and to truth, expressed in famous sonnets by Baudelaire and Rimbaud. Baudelaire wrote his famous sonnet *Correspondances*:

La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers  
Laisser parfois sortir de confuses paroles;  
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles  
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.

Here Nature is looked upon as 'symbolic of another kind of reality'. Dr. Bowra goes on to say that 'The essence of Symbolism is its insistence on a world of ideal beauty, and its conviction that this is realized through art'. Obviously, though, symbolism is capable of various interpretations, and these variations explain the remarkable divergences of the poets whom Dr. Bowra discusses, all of whom were influenced by Symbolism.

To some poets, the symbol is the fixed object which the poet contemplates, as a crystal gazer looks into a crystal. The symbol therefore suggests marble, crystal, silence, a calm sea, endlessness of light. In Valéry's poetry, there seems to be this stillness and silence traversed by a light breeze, or stained by the transparent colour. In a world of motionless objects the question of the creative process of poetry disturbs him. It becomes a metaphysical question about the nature of perfection. Like the rapt contemplation of St. John of the Cross it expresses itself in erotic imagery, not merely because the erotic side of the poet's life is sublimated, but because the creative process in art disturbs him in a way which is parallel to the images of longing.

Dr. Bowra's essay on Valéry is perhaps the best in the book, as this poetry responds best to his interpretative method. He is a poet with spiritual and intellectual aims of extraordinary purity. He needs interpretation, and it never strikes one that when he explains his own intellectual processes he is being dishonest. This certainly strikes one with George, who was a poet of sorrow, frozen greatness, in whom the desire to achieve an effect of striking every word on stone is involved with a desire for power, so that his poems have the effect of being cut out on marble plaques in a Valhalla. Nor can I like Yeats quite at his face value when he writes:

'All sounds, all colours, all forms, either because of their pre-ordained energies or because of long association, evoke indefinable and yet precise notions, or, as I prefer to think, call down among us certain disembodied powers, whose footsteps over our hearts we call emotions', etc.

But Yeats was a symbolist, with a system of symbols. His symbols are not crystals for gazing into until infinite meanings arise; they are signs which present things not themselves, or as well as themselves. Whether these meanings, elaborated in that extraordinary compilation *A Vision*, really help



the reader often is doubtful; but, undoubtedly, they helped Yeats. He used his magical system as a means of creating an intellectual domain of his own in which he was prince. Thus he freed himself from the limitations of the hole-in-the-corner situation in the real world (especially in Ireland) of the modern poet. This subject, the effect on a poet's writing of his position in the intellectual life of a modern world which does not really find any place for poetry, is important. It immensely concerned Valéry, Rilke, George and Yeats (I do not know about Blok). Dr. Bowra, one of whose virtues is intellectual fearlessness, has the courage to raise this problem when he writes:—

'Homer, Dante, Shakespeare . . . were fortunate in their times which expected a poet to be a repository of wisdom and to have a special insight into life. The modern poet is less lucky. Much of his inherited task has been taken from him by science. The astronomer, the geographer, the psychologist are thought to know more about their subjects than ever he can.'

Dr. Bowra relates his poets to this modern situation. One aspect of it is a kind of hardening of each poet into a final attitude which he has decided to be his intellectual sphere. A poet's traditionalism or symbolism or surrealism is not just his particular 'line' within a defined intellectual activity called poetry; it is his justification for poetic activity altogether. A reader of Maurice Bowra's book cannot fail to be struck by the fact that his poets declare themselves to have aims and methods which are totally irreconcilable.

Stefan George, in his *Apotheogms about Poetry*, published in 1894, starts off by saying, 'Every opposing spirit, every reasoning and wrangling with life points to a still disordered spirit and must be excluded from art. The worth of poetry is decided not by meaning (otherwise it would be wisdom, instruction), but by form', and so on. Later he changed his mind to the extent that his poetry became brutally didactic, but never to the extent that he would have accepted Dr. Bowra's remarks about Alexander Blok as anything but *prima facie* evidence that Blok was no poet: 'He believed that a poet must write out of his intuition, his emotional and imaginative experiences, that he must rid himself of the deceptive processes of logic and dialectic.' Moreover the Stefan George circle would not tolerate Rilke at any price. They regarded him as affected, weak-spirited, depressive and emotional; and they disagreed with both the form and the matter of his work. In fact, you were, I understand, expelled from the George circle if you liked Rilke.

Rilke himself made a distinction between different sets of symbols, such as Nature, angels, animals, different classes of human beings, and man-made phenomena. As Dr. Bowra mentions, machinery plays an important part in the world of his poetry. For he regarded the modern environment of industrialism as a language of phenomena produced by disordered minds. Machines belong to a mental landscape, and it is part of the task of the poet's interpretation of the phenomenal world to show man how to order them instead of being ruled by them. Whatever Rilke's merits as a poet may be, he went very far towards defining the task of the poet in the modern world. Aided by tradition, Nature, animals, childhood, as guides, man can gradually interpret the environment which he has produced back into terms of human existence. If language can be ordered, then the phenomena produced by human minds can also be ordered and understood and related.



'The poet', as Dr. Bowra concludes, 'can do something that other men cannot do. He can give a special kind of life through his art; he can show what things really mean in their associations and relations.' The strength of symbolism lies in its insistence on 'another meaning'. The rather mysterious utterances of the symbolists are coming to have a new significance for us in the present stage of history. That astonishing magazine *Fontaine*, published in Algiers, devoted in the Spring of 1942 a number to 'la poésie comme exercice spirituel', prefaced by a quotation from Mallarmé: 'Je balbutie, meurtri: la poésie est l'expression, par le langage humain ramené à son rythme essentiel, du sens mystérieux de l'existence. Elle doue ainsi d'authenticité notre séjour et constitue la seule tâche spirituelle.'

An alternative development for modern poetry to that of harnessing it to the traditional orthodoxy of the Churches would be for it to become the expression, through the continual free invention of symbols and myths, of the spiritual and religious side of man's nature in the face of a universe whose ultimate secrets are withdrawn and unknown. The poet would thus become the priest of a continually developing religion of life. The growth of spirituality, not generally accompanied by a return to dogmatic religion, is one of the most remarkable signs of the times; when the war is over, it may well be found that this growth had gone further in France than in any other country, and that the French poets, disciplined by despair, suffering and revelation of what it means to be human, may be the spiritual leaders in a 'literature to save humanity'.

STEPHEN SPENDER

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